PEARL HARBOR TO GUADALCANAL

History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II

VOLUME I

HISTORICAL BRANCH, G-3 DIVISION, HEADQUARTERS, U.S. MARINE CORPS

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Pearl Harbor to Guadalcanal

HISTORY OF U. S. MARINE CORPS OPERATIONS IN WORLD WAR II

VOLUME I

by

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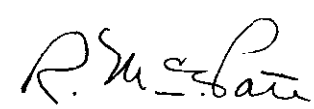
Foreword

With the recent completion of our historical monograph project, the Marine Corps historical program entered a new phase. This book is the first of a projected five-volume series covering completely, and we hope definitively, the history of Marine operations in World War II.

The fifteen historical monographs published over a period of eight years have served to spotlight the high points in this broad field. The basic research which underlay their preparation will be utilized again in this project. But a monograph by its very nature aims at a limited objective, and in its concentration on a single battle or campaign necessarily ignores many related subjects. All too often it has been difficult to avoid conveying the impression that the specific operation under discussion was taking place in a vacuum. Thus, while much valuable history has been written, the story as a whole remains untold.

This lack the present project aims to rectify. The story of individual battles or campaigns, now isolated between the covers of separate publications, will be largely rewritten and woven together in an attempt to show events in proper relation to each other and in correct perspective to the war as a whole. In addition, new material, especially from Japanese sources, which has become available since the writing of the monographs, will be integrated into the story. Only when the broad picture is available can the significance of the Marine Corps' contribution to the final victory in the Pacific be fairly evaluated.

Now a word about Volume I which sketches briefly the development of the Marine Corps' amphibious mission from its inception and then carries the story of World War II through Guadalcanal. As logistical officer of the 1st Marine Division, I was privileged to take part in this, our first effort to strike back at the Japanese. Looking rearward from the vantage point of later years when our materiel superiority was overwhelming, it is difficult to visualize those lean first months in the Pacific when there was never enough of anything, and Allied strategy of giving top priority to Europe meant that there would not be for some time to come. Thus our initial offensive quickly and richly earned the nickname "Operation Shoestring." But the shoestring held during those early critical days when its holding appeared highly questionable; and when it did, the ultimate outcome of the war in the Pacific ceased to remain in doubt.



R. McC. PATE
GENERAL, U. S. MARINE CORPS
COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

Preface

This book covers Marine Corps participation through the first precarious year of World War II, when disaster piled on disaster and there seemed no way to check Japanese aggression. Advanced bases and garrisons were isolated and destroyed: Guam, Wake, and the Philippines. The sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, "the day that will live in infamy," seriously crippled the U. S. Pacific Fleet; yet that cripple rose to turn the tide of the entire war at Midway. Shortly thereafter the U. S. Marines launched on Guadalcanal an offensive which was destined to end only on the home islands of the Empire.

The country in general, and the Marine Corps in particular, entered World War II in a better state of preparedness than had been the case in any other previous conflict. But that is a comparative term and does not merit mention in the same sentence with the degree of Japanese preparedness. What the Marine Corps did bring into the war, however, was the priceless ingredient developed during the years of peace: the amphibious doctrines and techniques that made possible the trans-Pacific advance—and, for that matter, the invasion of North Africa and the European continent.

By publishing this operational history in a durable form, it is hoped to make the Marine Corps record permanently available for the study of military personnel, the edification of the general public, and the contemplation of serious scholars of military history.

This initial volume was planned and outlined by Lieutenant Colonel Harry W. Edwards, former Head of the Historical Branch, G–3 Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps. Much of the original writing was done by Lieutenant Colonel Frank O. Hough, formerly Head of the Writing Section, Historical Branch. Three historical monographs, Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Heinl, Jr.'s *The Defense of Wake* and *Marines at Midway*, and Major John L. Zimmerman's *The Guadalcanal Campaign*, were adapted to the needs of this book by Major Verle E. Ludwig, who also contributed considerable original writing of his own. Mr. Kenneth W. Condit wrote the chapter on landing craft development and shared, with Colonel Charles W. Harrison and Major Hubard D. Kuokka, the authorship of the chapter treating the evolution of amphibious doctrine. The buildup of Pacific outpost garrisons, the opening moves of the war, and the record of Marines in the defense of the Philippines were written by Mr. Henry I. Shaw, Jr. The final editing was done by Colonel Harrison, present Head of the Historical Branch.

A number of the leading participants in the actions described have commented on preliminary drafts of pertinent portions of this manuscript. Their

valuable assistance is gratefully acknowledged. Special thanks are due to those people who read and commented on the entire volume: Lieutenant General Edward A. Craig, U. S. Marine Corps, Retired; Dr. John Miller, Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army; Captain Frederick K. Loomis, U. S. Navy, Naval History Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Department of the Navy; and Colonel Heinl, who initiated the original program of monographs dealing with Marine actions in World War II.

Mrs. Edna Clem Kelley and her successor in the Administrative and Production Section of the Historical Branch, Miss Kay P. Sue, ably handled the exacting duties involved in processing the volume from first drafts through final printed form. The many preliminary typescripts and the painstaking task of typing the final manuscript for the printer were done by Mrs. Miriam R. Smallwood and Mrs. Billie J. Tucker.

Most of the maps were prepared by the Reproduction Section, Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, Virginia. However, we are indebted to the Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, for permission to use Maps Nos. 3, 14, 15, 20, 21, and 23–27, which were originally drafted by its Cartographic Branch. Official Defense Department photographs have been used throughout the text.

E. W. SNEDEKER
MAJOR GENERAL, U. S. MARINE CORPS
ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF, G–3

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PART ONE

Introduction to the Marine Corps

Origins of a Mission

In a sense, Marines may be said to have existed in ancient times when the Phoenicians, and subsequently the Greeks and Romans, placed men aboard their ships for the specific purpose of fighting, in contrast to the crews who navigated them and the rowers who propelled them. However, Marines in the modern sense date to Seventeenth Century England where, in 1664, a regiment of ground troops was raised specifically for duty with the fleet as well as ashore. This unit bore the somewhat ponderous title: "Duke of York and Albany's Maritime Regiment of Foot." Over a period of many decades of expansion and evolution, during much of which nobody knew for certain whether it belonged to the Army or the Navy, this basic unit developed into the corps known today as the Royal Marines.

By the time of the American Revolution, the status of the British Marines had jelled firmly. Thus, when the American Colonies revolted and began setting up their own armed services, they modeled these much along the lines of the similar components of the mother country, these being the forms with which they were most familiar and which suited them best temperamentally. This was true of the Continental Marines and to an even greater degree of the Marine Corps, reactivated under the Constitution in 1798.

In the days of wooden, sail-propelled ships the functions of the Marines became well defined. At sea they kept order and were responsible for internal security. In combat they became the ship's small-arms fighters: sniping from the fighting tops, and on deck spearheading boarding parties in close action or repelling enemy boarders. Ashore they guarded naval installations, both at home and abroad, and upon occasion fought on land beside Army components. Amphibious-wise, they were available as trained landing parties, either to seize positions on hostile shores, or to protect the lives and property of nationals in foreign countries. Both the British and U. S. Marines have seen much such service.

At the time of this writing the Marine Corps is 181 years old, according to its own reckoning, though its service has not been continuous. Marines celebrate their Corps' birthday on 10 November, this being the date in the year 1775 when the Continental Congress authorized the raising of two battalions of Marines for the Continental service. The scanty records extant show nothing to indicate that those battalions were actually raised, but many Marines were recruited for service on board the ships of the infant Navy where they performed creditably in all the major sea actions of the Revolutionary War, staged two important amphibious landings in the Bahamas, and ashore participated in the Trenton-Princeton campaign under General Washington.

The Continental Marines, like the Navy and all but a minuscule detachment of the Army, passed out of existence following the close of the Revolutionary War. How-

ever, foreign pressures brought the Navy back into existence in 1798 under the recently adopted Constitution, and on 11 July of that year the Marine Corps was reactivated as a separate service within the naval establishment.

Since that date Marines have fought in every official war the United States has had—and scores of obscure affairs that lacked official blessing but in which, to quote the eminent Marine writer, John W. Thomason, Jr., ". . . a man can be killed as dead as ever a chap was in the Argonne."[1] They have served as strictly naval troops, both ashore and afloat, and participated in extended land operations under Army command, notably in the Creek-Seminole Indian Wars of the 1830's, the Mexican War, both World Wars, and in Korea.

All over the world, Britian's Royal Marines were seeing much the same type of service. For a century or more the courses of the two corps ran parallel, and they were as functionally alike as it is possible for any two military organizations to be. Individual members of these services had so many interests in common that, as one British writer put it, they had a tendency to "chum up"[2] when ships of the two nations put in to the same ports. Even the present U. S. Marine emblem (adopted in 1868) derives from that of the Royal Marines; though at a glance they appear entirely different, the basic motifs of both are the fouled anchor and globe: the Eastern Hemisphere for the British, the Western for the U. S. Much in common existed at top level, as well, and over the years the two organizations developed a very close and most cordial relationship that exists to this day, despite the strange evolutionary divergence that set in between them.[3]

The transition of navies from sail to steam began evolutionary developments which profoundly altered the nature of all shipboard duties, and temporarily threatened both corps with extinction. From this the Royal Marines emerged burdened with a miscellany of often incongruous duties never envisioned in the old days, and considerably emasculated by lack of a single mission of overriding importance. That the effect on the U. S. Marines was precisely the reverse resulted from the fundamental difference in the problems facing the two nations which required U. S. Marines to carve out a special mission for themselves, though they traveled a long, uneven road in bringing this to full fruition.

The basic problem that confronted the early steam navies was that of obtaining fuel. Sail-propelled men-of-war, on which all naval experience and tradition up to that time was based, could operate at sea almost indefinitely, putting in only to replenish provisions and water, readily available at nearly any port of call anywhere in the world. But sufficient coal to support large-scale steamship operations could be obtained only from well stocked bases, and a fleet's operating radius thus became limited by the location of such bases. If an enemy lay beyond that radius, the fleet might as well be chained to a post so far as getting at

[1] Capt J. W. Thomason, Jr., *Fix Bayonets!* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955 ed.), xiv.

[2] LtCol M. Rose, RMA, *A Short History of the Royal Marines* (Deal, England: Depot Royal Marines, 1911), 22.

[3] LtCol R. D. Heinl, Jr., "What Happened to the Royal Marines?," *USNI Proceedings*, February 1949, 169.

him was concerned, unless the source of supply could be projected farther in his direction.

To the British Empire, on which "the sun never sets," this posed no serious problem; it had, or could build, all the bases it needed without leaving its own territory. But the United States, with few outlying possessions, had genuine cause for concern. In order to give the fleet significant operating range in the Pacific, the Navy in 1878 set up a coaling station in Samoa, and in 1887 the government concluded a treaty with Hawaii permitting the establishment of another at Pearl Harbor.

But the United States had no deep-seated interest in the Far East during this era, and no serious apprehension of an attack from that direction. The Navy's principal concern lay in the possibility of being obliged to enforce the Monroe Doctrine in the Caribbean or South Atlantic. As early as 1880, far-sighted naval officers began turning their thoughts toward this mission. The cost of maintaining permanent bases in those areas would have been prohibitive, so the problem boiled down to devising a plan for seizing advanced bases when and where strategy dictated their need and developing these as quickly as possible to withstand attack. The scattered, understrength U. S. Army of that era could not supply sufficient trained ground troops on the short notice necessary to make such operations effective, so the Navy faced the problem of developing ground troops of its own for service with the fleet.[4]

It would seem, particularly with benefit of today's hindsight, that the Marine Corps would be the logical choice for the development of this mission. However, this was not so apparent at the time. Marines had never participated in this type of operation on anything resembling the scale envisioned, and they comprised a very small unit as compared to the bluejackets. One school of thought contended that the advanced base function should be performed entirely by Navy personnel under command of naval officers, in the interests of unity and other considerations.[5] The controversy, strictly on the theoretical level, waxed warm and sometimes acrimonious, giving rise at length to one of those perennial efforts to eliminate the Marines altogether.[6]

However, the advent of the Spanish-American War found the Navy wholly unprepared to cope with the advanced base problem. It was the Marine Corps that promptly organized an expeditionary battalion, including its own artillery component, for the seizure of Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in order to enable the U. S. Fleet to operate indefinitely in the Caribbean waters. At Key West this unit underwent training in minor tactics, basic weapons, and musketry, and then landed in the target area on 10 June 1898, ten days before the first Army troops arrived off the coast of Cuba. There the Marines quickly secured a beachhead and successfully defended it against a numerically superior enemy.

[4] E. B. Potter (ed), *The United States and World Sea Power* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1955), 577–578, hereinafter cited as *U. S. & Sea Power*.

[5] For detailed discussion of this controversy, see W. H. Russell, "The Genesis of FMF Doctrine: 1879–1899," *MC Gazette*, April–July 1951.

[6] LtCol R. D. Heinl, Jr., "The Cat with More than Nine Lives," *USNI Proceedings*, June 1954.

CONTINENTAL MARINES *present a stirring sight as they charge in this symbolic painting of Revolutionary fighting by H. Charles McBarron, Jr. (USMC 304045)*

MARINES OF HUNTINGTON'S BATTALION, *first troops ashore in Cuba in 1898, captured Guantanamo Bay, used thereafter as an American naval base. (USMC 4982)*

So expeditiously and efficiently was this operation conducted that its contribution to the speedy and decisive culmination of the war would be difficult to evaluate. This also greatly strengthened the Marine Corps' claim to the Navy's amphibious mission, a claim that gained still further strength by Admiral Dewey's subsequent statement that if a similar Marine component had served with his fleet at Manila Bay, the whole painful and protracted Philippine Insurrection might have been avoided.

The Spanish-American War signalized emergence of the United States as a world power. Possession of the Philippines caused the Navy to reappraise the whole Far East situation. The USS *Charleston*, convoying Army troops to Manila, paused en route to seize the Spanish island of Guam to serve as an advanced coaling station,[7] and annexation of Hawaii followed shortly.[8] Additional advanced bases were established in the Philippines themselves as soon as the situation permitted.

This increasing consciousness of the Navy's widespread commitments and responsibilities brought about the evolutionary developments which culminated in the early 1940's in the amphibious assault doctrines and techniques "which finally made possible what Major General J. F. C. Fuller has called 'the most far-reaching tactical innovation of [World War II].'"[9]

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[7] Seizure of Guam required no landing force. The Spanish governor had not learned about the declaration of war and mistook the token naval bombardment for a courtesy salute and hurried out to the *Charleston* to apologize for his inability to return it for lack of ammunition. He promptly surrendered the island upon being apprised of the facts.

[8] Prior to the Spanish War, the question of the annexation of Hawaii had been under negotiation off and on for many years between that government and the United States. In a treaty signed in 1875, Hawaii had been declared "an American sphere of influence."

[9] Quoted in *U. S. & Sea Power*, 587.

Evolution of Modern Amphibious Warfare, 1920–1941

EARLY DEVELOPMENTS

The success of the Guantanamo Bay operation and the very real possibility that the United States' new position in world affairs might lead to repetitions of essentially the same situation led high-level naval strategists to become interested in establishing a similar force on a permanent basis: a force capable of seizing and defending advanced bases which the fleet could utilize in the prosecution of naval war in distant waters—waters conceivably much more distant than the Caribbean. This in turn led to the setting up of a class in the fundamentals of advanced base work at Newport, Rhode Island in 1901. During the winter of 1902–1903 a Marine battalion engaged in advanced base defense exercises on the island of Culebra in the Caribbean in conjunction with the annual maneuvers of the fleet. Expeditionary services in Cuba and Panama prevented an immediate follow-up to this early base defense instruction, but in 1910 a permanent advanced base school was organized at New London, Connecticut. A year later it was moved to Philadelphia.[1]

By 1913 sufficient progress had been made in advanced base instruction to permit the formation of a permanent advanced base force. Made up of two regiments, one of coast artillery, mines, searchlights, engineers, communicators, and other specialists for fixed defense, and the other of infantry and field artillery for mobile defense, the advanced base force totalled about 1,750 officers and men. In January of 1914 it was reinforced by a small Marine Corps aviation detachment and joined the fleet for maneuvers at Culebra.[2] But the analogy between advanced base training and the amphibious assault techniques that emerged in World War II is easily overdrawn. Prior to World War I the primary interest was in defense of a base against enemy attack. There was no serious contemplation of large-scale landings against heavily defended areas.

This all but exclusive concern for the defense of bases was clearly borne out by the writing of Major Earl H. Ellis. Ellis, one of the most brilliant young Marine staff officers, was among the farsighted military thinkers who saw the prospect of war between the United States and Japan prior to World War I. Around 1913, he directed attention to the

[1] J. A. Isely and P. A. Crowl, *The U. S. Marines and Amphibious War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 21–22, hereinafter cited as *Marines and Amphibious War*.

[2] *Annual Report of the Major General Commandant of the Marine Corps, 1914* (Washington: GPO, 1914). Hereinafter all annual reports from the Office of the Commandant will be cited as *CMC AnRept* (year).

problems of a future Pacific conflict. To bring military force to bear against Japan, Ellis pointed out, the United States would have to project its fleet across the Pacific. To support these operations so far from home would require a system of outlying bases. Hawaii, Guam, and the Philippines, which were the most important of these, we already possessed. Their defense would be of utmost importance and would constitute the primary mission of the Marine advanced base force. Ellis discussed in considerable detail the troops which would be required and the tactics they should employ.

In addition to the bases already in the possession of the United States, Ellis foresaw the need of acquiring others held by Japan. To the Marine Corps would fall the job of assaulting the enemy-held territory. Although he did not discuss the problems involved nor take up the tactics to be employed, Ellis foreshadowed the amphibious assault which was to be the primary mission of the Marine Corps in World War II.[3]

The infant Advance Base Force was diverted to other missions almost as soon as it was created. Hardly were the Culebra maneuvers of 1914 completed when the Marines were sent to Mexico for the seizure of Vera Cruz. The next year they went ashore in Haiti, and in 1916 unsettled conditions in Santo Domingo required the landing of Marines in that country. Expeditionary service in these two Caribbean republics was to constitute a heavy and continuing drain on Marine Corps resources which might otherwise have been devoted to advanced base activities.

The expansion of the Marine Corps to about 73,000 officers and men during World War I served as a temporary stimulant to the Advance Base Force. In spite of the demands for manpower resulting from the sending of an expeditionary force to France, the Advance Base Force was maintained at full strength throughout the war. By the Armistice it numbered 6,297 officers and men.[4]

UPS AND DOWNS OF THE NINETEEN TWENTIES

Marines returning from overseas late in 1919 picked up where they left off three years before. At Quantico the Advance Base Force, redesignated the Expeditionary Force in 1921, stood ready to occupy and defend an advanced base or to restore law and order in a Caribbean republic. In that year it included infantry, field artillery, signal, engineer, and chemical troops, and aircraft. A similar expeditionary force was planned for San Diego, but perennial personnel shortages prevented the stationing of more than one infantry regiment and one aircraft squadron there during the 1920's.[5]

Nothing seemed changed, but delegates of the Great Powers, meeting at Versailles to write the peace treaty ending World War I, had already taken an action which was to have far-reaching consequences for

[3] Earl H. Ellis, "Naval Bases" (MS, n. d.). The date and origin of this MS and to whom it was addressed are obscure, but it appears that the work is either a lecture or a series of lectures with the following divisions: "1. Naval Bases; Their Location, Resources and Security; 2. The Denial of Bases; 3. The Security of Advanced Bases and Advanced Base Operations; 4. The Advanced Base Force."

[4] LtCol C. H. Metcalf, *A History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York: Putnam's, 1939), 456–460, 472.

[5] *CMC AnRepts*, 1921–29.

a future generation of Marines. In the general distribution of spoils, the former German island possessions in the central Pacific had been mandated to the Japanese. At one stroke the strategic balance in the Pacific was shifted radically in favor of Japan. That country now possessed a deep zone of island outposts. Fortified and supported by the Japanese fleet, they would constitute a serious obstacle to the advance of the United States Fleet across the Pacific.

Earl Ellis was one of the first to recognize the significance of this strategic shift. In 1921 he modified his earlier ideas and submitted them in the form of Operations Plan 712, "Advanced Base Operations in Micronesia." In this plan Ellis stressed the necessity for seizing by assault the bases needed to project the Fleet across the Pacific. He envisioned the seizure of specific islands in the Marshall, Caroline, and Palau groups, some of which were actually taken by Marines in World War II. He went so far as to designate the size and type of units that would be necessary, the kind of landing craft they should use, the best time of day to effect the landing, and other details needed to insure the success of the plan. Twenty years later Marine Corps action was to bear the imprint of this thinking:

> To effect [an amphibious landing] in the face of enemy resistance requires careful training and preparation, to say the least; and this along Marine lines. It is not enough that the troops be skilled infantry men or artillery men of high morale; they must be skilled water men and jungle men who know it can be done—Marines with Marine training.[6]

The Commandant, Major General John A. Lejeune, and other high ranking Marines shared Ellis' views. "The seizure and occupation or destruction of enemy bases is another important function of the expeditionary force," he stated in a lecture before the Naval War College in 1923. "On both flanks of a fleet crossing the Pacific are numerous islands suitable for submarine and air bases. All should be mopped up as progress is made. . . . The maintenance, equipping and training of its expeditionary force so that it will be in instant readiness to support the Fleet in the event of war," he concluded, "I deem to be the most important Marine Corps duty in time of peace." [7]

The 1920s, however, were not the most favorable years for training in amphibious operations. Appropriations for the armed services were slim, and the Navy, whose cooperation and support was necessary to carry out landing exercises, was more intent on preparing for fleet surface actions of the traditional type. Still, a limited amount of amphibious training was carried out in the first half of the decade.

During the winter of 1922, a reinforced regiment of Marines participated in fleet maneuvers with the Atlantic Fleet. Their problems included the attack and defense of Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and the island of Culebra. In March of the following year, a detachment of Marines took part in a landing exercise at Panama, and a battalion of Marines and sailors practiced a landing on Cape Cod that summer.

Panama and Culebra both witnessed landing exercises early in 1924, with a Marine regiment participating. This set of exercises was the high point of train-

[6] OPlan 712, AdvBOps in Micronesia, 1921.

[7] MajGen J. A. Lejeune, "The United States Marine Corps," *MC Gazette*, December 1923, 252–253.

ing reached in the twenties. It marked the advent of serious experimentation with adequate landing craft for troops and equipment. However, it was most notable for the great number of mistakes made in the course of the exercises, such as inadequate attacking forces, insufficient and unsuitable boats, lack of order among the landing party, superficial naval bombardment, and poor judgment in the stowage of supplies and equipment aboard the single transport used.[8]

The last landing exercise of the era was a joint Army-Navy affair held during the spring of 1925 in Hawaiian waters. It was actually an amphibious command post exercise, undertaken at the insistence of General Lejeune to prove to skeptical Army officers that the Marine Corps could plan and execute an amphibious operation of greater than brigade size. A force of 42,000 Marines was simulated, although only 1,500 actually participated. It ran more smoothly than had the previous exercise, but still was handicapped by a lack of adequate landing craft.[9]

Even this meager amphibious training came to an end after 1925. New commitments in Nicaragua, in China, and in the United States guarding the mails served to disperse the expeditionary forces. By 1928 the Commandant announced in his annual report that barely enough personnel were on hand at Quantico and San Diego to keep those bases in operation.[10]

[8] *Marines and Amphibious War*, 30–32.

[9] BriGen Dion Williams, "Blue Marine Corps Expeditionary Force," *MC Gazette*, September 1925, 76–88; LtGen M. B. Twining ltr to ACofS, G–3, HQMC, 25Jan57; BPlan JA&Nav Exercise, 1925, Problem No 3, Blue MarCor ExpedFor, 8Jan25.

[10] *CMC AnRept*, 1928.

Whatever the shortcomings of the work in amphibious doctrine and technique during the 1920's, the Marine Corps scored a major triumph when its special interest in the field became part of the official military policy of the United States. *Joint Action of the Army and Navy*, a directive issued by the Joint Board of the Army and Navy in 1927, stated that the Marine Corps would provide and maintain forces "for land operations in support of the fleet for the initial seizure and defense of advanced bases and for such limited auxiliary land operations as are essential to the prosecution of the naval campaign."

Further, in outlining the tasks to be performed by the Army and Navy in "Landing Attacks Against Shore Objectives," this document firmly established the landing force role of the Marine Corps: "Marines organized as landing forces perform the same functions as above stated for the Army, and because of the constant association with naval units will be given special training in the conduct of landing operations." [11]

ACTIVATION OF THE FLEET MARINE FORCE

The recognition of a mission did not create the doctrine nor the trained forces to carry it out, and, in 1927, neither was at hand. In January 1933 the last Marine had departed from Nicaragua, and withdrawal from Haiti was contemplated. Troops were now becoming available for training in landing operations, but before any real progress could be made, one preliminary step was essential. A substantial permanent force of Marines with its

[11] The Joint Board, *Joint Action of the Army and Navy* (Washington: GPO, 1927), 3, 12.

MARINES IN FRANCE IN WORLD WAR I, *part of the 4th Marine Brigade of the 2d Infantry Division, prepare to move up to the front line trenches. (USMC 4967)*

BANDIT-HUNTING PATROL *in Nicaragua in 1929 typifies Marine activities between the World Wars when the Corps served as a Caribbean riot squad. (USMC 515283)*

own commander and staff would have to be organized for the purpose, otherwise training would be constantly interrupted by the dispersal of the troops to other commitments.

No one recognized this more clearly than the Assistant Commandant, Brigadier General John H. Russell. He assembled a staff at Quantico to plan the organization of a force which could be rapidly assembled for service with the Fleet. In August of 1933 he proposed to the Commandant that the old "Expeditionary Force" be replaced by a new body, to be called either "Fleet Marine Force," or "Fleet Base Defense Force." The new force, while an integral part of the United States Fleet, would be under the operational control of the Fleet Commander when embarked on vessels of the Fleet or engaged in fleet exercises afloat or ashore. When not so embarked or engaged it would remain under the Major General Commandant.

Russell's recommendations were promptly approved by the Commandant and by the Chief of Naval Operations. The designation "Fleet Marine Force" (FMF) was preferred by the senior naval staffs, and the Commandant was requested to submit proposed instructions for establishing "appropriate command and administrative relations between the commander in Chief and the Commander of the Fleet Marine Force." [12] The decision became official with the issuance of Navy Department General Order 241, dated 8 December 1933.

This directive could well be called the Magna Carta of the Fleet Marine Force. It stated:

1. The force of marines maintained by the major general commandant in a state of readiness for operations with the fleet is hereby designated as fleet marine force (F. M. F.), and as such shall constitute a part of the organization of the United States Fleet and be included in the operating force plan for each fiscal year.

2. The fleet marine force shall consist of such units as may be designated by the major general commandant and shall be maintained at such strength as is warranted by the general personnel situation of the Marine Corps.

3. The fleet marine force shall be available to the commander in chief for operations with the fleet or for exercises either afloat or ashore in connection with fleet problems. The commander in chief shall make timely recommendations to the Chief of Naval Operations regarding such service in order that the necessary arrangements may be made.

4. The commander in chief shall exercise command of the fleet marine force when embarked on board vessels of the fleet or when engaged in fleet exercises, either afloat or ashore. When otherwise engaged, command shall be directed by the major general commandant.

5. The major general commandant shall detail the commanding general of the fleet marine force and maintain an appropriate staff for him.

6. The commanding general, fleet marine force, shall report by letter to the commander in chief, United States Fleet, for duty in connection with the employment of the fleet marine force. At least once each year, and at such times as may be considered desirable by the commander in chief, the commanding general, fleet marine force, with appropriate members of his staff, shall be ordered to report to the commander in chief for conference.[13]

However significant the creation of the FMF may have been in terms of the future, its initial form was modest enough. The Commandant was obliged to report in August 1934 that the responsibility for maintaining ship's detachments and garrisons abroad, and performing essential

[12] CNO ltr to CMC, 12Sep33; *Marines and Amphibious War*, 33–34.

[13] Navy Dept GO 241, 8Dec33.

guard duty at naval shore stations, prevented the Marine Corps from assigning the component units necessary to fulfill the mission of the FMF. At this time the total number of officers and men in the FMF was about 3,000.[14]

"THE BOOK" COMES OUT

With the creation of the FMF the Marine Corps had finally acquired the tactical structure necessary to carry out the primary war mission assigned to it by the Joint Board in 1927. The next order of business was to train the FMF for the execution of its mission.

But the training could not be very effective without a textbook embodying the theory and practice of landing operations. No such manual existed in 1933. There was a general doctrine by the Joint Board issued in 1933, and, though it offered many sound definitions and suggested general solutions to problems, it lacked necessary detail.

In November 1933, all classes at the Marine Corps Schools were suspended, and, under the guidance of Colonel Ellis B. Miller, Assistant Commandant of the Schools, both the faculty and students set to work to write a manual setting forth in detail the doctrines and techniques to be followed in both training and actual operations. Under the title, *Tentative Manual for Landing Operations*, it was issued in January 1934.

On 1 August 1934, the title was changed to *Manual for Naval Overseas Operations* and some changes were effected in the text. A few months later this publication, now retitled *Tentative Landing Operations Manual*, was approved by the Chief of Naval Operations for "temporary use . . . as a guide for forces of the Navy and the Marine Corps conducting a landing against opposition."[15] In mimeographed form it was given relatively limited distribution within the Navy, but wide distribution within the Marine Corps. Comments were invited.

The doctrine laid down in this remarkable document was destined to become the foundation of all amphibious thinking in the United States armed forces. The Navy accepted it as official doctrine in 1938 under the title of *Fleet Training Publication 167*, and in 1941 the War Department put the Navy text between Army covers and issued it as *Field Manual 31–5*.

Remarkable as it was, the Marine amphibious doctrine was largely theory when it was first promulgated at Quantico in 1934. To put the theory into practice, major landing exercises were resumed. They were held each winter from 1935 through 1941 on the islands of Culebra and Vieques in conjunction with fleet exercises in the Caribbean, or on San Clemente off the California coast. A final exercise of the prewar period on a much larger scale than any previously attempted was held at the newly acquired Marine Corps base at New River, North Carolina, in the summer of 1941. These fleet landing exercises provided the practical experience by which details of landing operations were hammered out.

In light of its importance, here might be as good a place as any to consider briefly the more basic aspects of this doctrine as conceived in the original manual and mod-

[14] *CMC AnRept*, 1934.

[15] NavDept, *Tentative Landing Operations Manual*, 1935, hereinafter cited as *Tentative Landing Operations Manual*.

ified by experience in fleet exercises up to the outbreak of the war. Amphibious operations and ordinary ground warfare share many of the same tactical principles. The basic difference between them lies in the fact that the amphibious assault is launched from the sea, and is supported by naval elements. While water-borne the landing force is completely powerless and is dependent upon the naval elements for all its support: gunfire, aviation, transportation, and communication. In this initial stage only the naval elements have the capability of reacting to enemy action. As the landing force, however, is projected onto the beach, its effectiveness, starting from zero at the water's edge, increases rapidly until its strength is fully established ashore.

COMMAND RELATIONSHIPS

This basic difference between land and amphibious operations created a problem in command relationships which has plagued amphibious operations from earliest times. During the initial stage when only naval elements have the capability of reacting to enemy action it has been generally and logically agreed that the over-all command must be vested in the commander of the naval attack force. It has, however, not been so generally agreed in the past that once the landing force is established ashore and capable of exerting its combat power with primary reliance on its own weapons and tactics that the landing force commander should be freed to conduct the operations ashore as he sees fit.

The authors of the *Tentative Landing Operations Manual*, writing in 1934, evidently did not foresee that this particular aspect of command relations presented a problem that required resolution.[16] They simply defined the "attack force" as all the forces necessary to conduct a landing operation and added that the attack force commander was to be the senior naval officer of the fleet units making up the attack force. His command was to consist of the landing force and several naval components, organized as task groups for the support of the landing. These included, among others, the fire support, transport, air, screening, antisubmarine, and reconnaissance groups. The commanders of the landing force and of the several naval task groups operated on the same level under the over-all command of the attack force commander throughout the operation.

This initial command concept was destined to undergo a number of modifications and interpretations which will be discussed in this history as they occur. The first important change did not come about until toward the close of the Guadalcanal campaign.[17]

NAVAL GUNFIRE SUPPORT

There is nothing new in the concept of using the fire of ships' guns to cover an amphibious landing of troops during its most vulnerable phase: before, during, and after the ship-to-shore movement. Our

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[16] Unless otherwise noted the material in the remainder of this chapter is derived from *Tentative Landing Operations Manual; FTP–167, Landing Operations Doctrine, U. S. Navy* (Washington: Office of the CNO, 1938) and changes 1 & 2 thereto; 1st MarBrig ltr to CMC, 5Jun39 and encl (a) thereto; 1st MarBrig Flex 6 Rept, "Notes from Critique for Makee Learn Problem at Culebra, 14–15Feb40;" 2d MarBrig Minor Landing Exercises Rept, San Clemente Island, Calif, 17Apr–6May39.

[17] See Part VI of this history.

own history contains many examples of this technique, notably: two landings of U. S. troops in Canada during the War of 1812 (York and Niagara Peninsula, summer 1813); General Scott's landing at Vera Cruz in 1847 during the Mexican War; several amphibious operations during the Civil War, *e. g.*, Fort Fisher in 1865; and Guantanamo Bay during the Spanish-American War in 1898.

However, the evolution of modern weapons posed difficult problems of a technical nature, and the much belabored Gallipoli operation seemed to indicate that these were insoluble. High-powered naval guns, with their flat trajectory and specialized armor-piercing ammunition, proved no true substitute for land-based field artillery, and much study and practice would be required to develop techniques which would make them even an acceptable substitute.

Nevertheless, a rudimentary doctrine concerning naval gunfire support evolved during the years between 1935 and 1941. But it evolved slowly and none too clearly. Experimentation indicated that bombardment ammunition, with its surface burst, was better suited to fire missions against most land targets, while armor-piercing shells could be employed to good effect against concrete emplacements and masonry walls. The types of ships and guns best adapted to perform specific fire missions—close support, deep support, counterbattery, interdiction, etc.—were determined. And some progress was made in fire observation technique.

Three types of observers were provided for: aerial, shipboard and, once the first waves had landed, shore fire control parties. For the greater part of this period the latter were made up of personnel of the firing ships, inexperienced in such work, untrained, and wholly unfamiliar with the tactical maneuvers of the troops they were supporting. Not until 1941 were trained Marine artillery officers with Marine radio crews substituted, the naval officers then serving in a liaison capacity.

Other considerations of a naval nature served as further limiting factors on the NGF support concept. The necessity for the support ships to have a large proportion of armor-piercing projectiles readily available with which to fight a surface action on short notice restricted the accessibility of and limited the amount of bombardment shells carried. In turn, the probability of enemy air and submarine action once the target area became known caused much apprehension in naval minds and dictated the earliest possible departure of the firing ships from the objective. An example of this apprehension at work came to the fore early in the Guadalcanal campaign.[18]

Furthermore, tradition dies hard in any service. The traditional belief that warships exist for the sole purpose of fighting other warships dates far back in history, with one of its leading exponents the great Lord Nelson with his oft-quoted dictum: "A ship's a fool to fight a fort." This supposed vulnerability of surface vessels to shore-based artillery remained very much alive in the minds of naval planners. So they dictated that support ships should deliver their fires at maximum range while traveling at high speed and maneuvering radically—not exactly conducive to pin-point markmanship.[19]

In sum, these considerations, the starting concept of naval gunfire support with which we

[18] See Part VI, Chap 2, of this history.

[19] *Marines and Amphibious War*, 38.

entered World War II, added up to this: a bombardment of very short duration, delivered by ships firing relatively limited ammunition allowances of types often not well suited to the purpose, from long ranges while maneuvering at high speeds. Obviously, the best that could be expected would be area neutralization of enemy defenses during troop debarkation and the ship-to-shore movement, followed by a limited amount of support on a call basis, with this, too, to be withdrawn as soon as field artillery could be landed.[20]

Area neutralization—that was the basic concept, with deliberate destruction fire ruled out. A blood bath would be required to expunge this from "The Book."

AIR SUPPORT

As the Marine Corps developed the various techniques contributing to a smooth landing operation, it had to give more and more consideration to the fast growth of military aviation as a powerful arm.

Even the original *Tentative Landing Operations Manual* considered the vulnerable concentrations of troops in transports, landing boats, and on the beach and called for a three-to-one numerical superiority over the enemy in the air. Later, in *FTP-167*, the ratio was increased to four-to-one, primarily to wipe the enemy air threat out of the skies and secondarily to shatter the enemy's beachhead defense and to cut off his reinforcements.

Considerable emphasis was placed, however, on direct assistance to the troops themselves. This included such supporting services as guiding the landing boats to the beach, laying smoke screens, and providing reconnaissance and spotting for naval gunfire and artillery. Most importantly, it included rendering direct fire support to the landing force until the artillery was ashore and ready to fire.

For this air war, employment of Marine squadrons on carriers was considered ideal but, due to a limited number of carriers, was not always a practical possibility. Planners even considered moving Marine planes ashore in crates and assembling them, after the ground troops had seized an airfield.

Hence, the *Tentative Landing Operations Manual* called for the Navy to carry most of the initial air battle. Marine pilots, however, might be employed with Navy air units. Actually, in order to exercise Marine air, most of the early training landings had to be scheduled within round trip flying distance of friendly airfields. Although by 1940 Marine carrier training operations were becoming routine, the heavy reliance upon Navy carrier air over Marine landings lasted throughout the war.

As noted before, close coordination of air with ground received great emphasis in the Marine Corps. Even in Santo Domingo and Haiti and later in Nicaragua, Marine pilots reconnoitered, strafed, and bombed insurgent positions, dropped supplies to patrols, and evacuated wounded. The *Tentative Landing Operations Manual* incorporated this teamwork into its new amphibious doctrine, and the landing exercises of the late 30's developed aviation fire power as an important close ground support weapon. By 1939, Colonel Roy S. Geiger advocated and other Marine Corps leaders conceded that one of the greatest potentials of Marine aviation lay in this "close air support."

The challenge became that of applying the fire power of Marine air, when needed,

[20] SM–67, *Naval Gunfire in Amphibious Operations* (Quantico: MCEC, MCS, 1955), 2.

to destroy a specific enemy front line position without endangering nearby friendly troops.

Refinement of this skilled technique as we know it today was slow because of many factors. There was so much for pilots to learn about rapidly developing military aviation that close air support had to take its place in the busy training syllabus after such basic drill as aerial tactics, air to air gunnery, strafing, bombing, navigation, carrier landings, and communications, and constant study of the latest in engineering, aerodynamics, and flight safety.

Also, whenever newer, faster, and higher flying airplanes trickled into the Marine Corps in the lean thirties, they were found to be less adaptable for close coordination with ground troops than the slower, open cockpit planes which supported the patrol actions of Nicaragua.

In Nicaragua the aviator in his open cockpit could idle his throttle so as to locate an enemy machine gun by its sound, but in the maneuvers of 1940 pilots flashing by in their enclosed cockpits found it difficult to see what was going on below or even to differentiate between friendly and "enemy" hills.[21] In Nicaragua, the Marine flier was most often an ex-infantryman, but 10 years later many of the new Navy-trained Marine aviators were fresh from college and knew little about ground tactics. The lack of a real enemy to look for, identify, and to shoot at hindered attempts at precision, especially since air-ground radio was not yet as reliable as the old slow but sure system where pilots read code messages from cloth panels laid on the ground or swooped down with weighted lines to snatch messages suspended between two poles.

The main key to development of close air support lay in reliable communications to permit quick liaison and complete understanding between the pilot and the front line commander. Part of the solution lay in more exercises in air-ground coordination with emphasis on standardized and simplied air-ground communications and maps. By 1939 an aviator as an air liaison officer was assigned to the 1st Marine Brigade Staff. While both artillery and naval gunfire, however, employed forward observers at front line positions, air support control was still being channeled slowly through regimental and brigade command posts.[22] In the same year one squadron sent up an air liaison officer in the rear seat of a scouting or bombing plane to keep abreast of the ground situation and to direct fighter or dive bomber pilots onto targets by means of radio.[23] This was better but not best.

Meanwhile, war flamed up in Europe. Navy and Marine planners took note as the Germans drove around the Maginot line with their special air-ground "armored packets" in which aviation teamed up with the fast, mobile ground elements to break up resistance.[24] By this time the Marines were working on the idea of plac-

[21] From Culebra came the report, "1st MAG as a whole performed in a creditable manner, although at one stage they were impartial in their attacks." 1st MarBrig Flex 6 Rept, "Notes from Critique for Makee Learn Problem at Culebra, 14–15Feb40."

[22] LtGen Julian C. Smith interview by HistBr, G–3, HQMC, 25Jul56.

[23] Col R. D. Moser interview by HistBr, G–3, HQMC, 31Aug56.

[24] WD G–2 Memo for C/S, 23Sep41, I. B. 130, Air-GrdOps, Tab C; CinCLant Flex 6 Rept, 13Jun40, 14–15.

ing radio-equipped "observers" on the front lines to control air support for the troops. But the Leathernecks were already in the war before the first standardized Navy-Marine Corps instructions on their employment appeared.[25] Also at that time, on Guadalcanal certain infantry officers were given additional duty as regimental "air forward observers." They were coached on the spot by aviators of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing.[26]

THE SHIP-TO-SHORE MOVEMENT

The ship-to-shore movement was visualized by the *Tentative Landing Operations Manual* in a manner which resembled closely a conventional attack in land warfare: artillery preparation, approach march, deployment, and assault by the infantry. It stressed that this movement was no simple ferrying operation but a vital and integral part of the attack itself and demanded a high order of tactical knowledge and skill.

The two major problems in the ship-to-shore movement are the speedy debarkation of the assaulting troops and their equipment into the landing boats and the control and guiding of these craft to their assigned beaches. To facilitate the first, the *Tentative Landing Operations Manual* directed that each transport on which combat units were embarked should carry as a minimum sufficient boats to land a reinforced infantry battalion.[27] Thus each transport and its accompanying troops would be tactically self-sufficient for the assault landing, and the loss of one ship would not be a crippling blow. To expedite their debarkation the Marines generally went over the side via cargo nets rigged at several stations on the ship.

To solve the second major problem in the ship-to-shore movement, that of controlling and guiding the landing craft to their proper beaches, the *Tentative Landing Operations Manual* provided for: (1) marking the line of departure with buoys or picket boats; (2) a designated control vessel to lead each boat group from the rendezvous area to the line of departure, towing the boats in fog, smoke, or darkness, if necessary; (3) wave and alternate wave guide boats; (4) each boat to carry a signboard with its assigned letter and number indicating its proper position in the formation; and (5) for a guide plane to lead the boat waves in.

The system for the control of the ship-to-shore movement was still substantially the same as prescribed in the *Tentative Landing Operations Manual* when the Marines made their first amphibious landing of World War II at Guadalcanal on 7 August 1942.

COMBAT UNIT LOADING

"Combat unit loading" of transports is the key to amphibious logistics as developed by the Marine Corps. This is a practical process designed to make supplies and equipment immediately available to the assault troops in the order needed, disregarding to a large extent the waste of cargo space which results. In contrast is commercial loading which is equally

[25] USN, CSP–1536, 5Sep42.

[26] 1st MarDiv, Final Report on Guadalcanal Operation, 1Jul43, Phase V, Annex D, OPlan 2–42, 5. The directive on appointing air forward observers was dated 2Oct42.

[27] This general concept that troops and their landing craft should be transported together to the objective area remained valid throughout the war, although at times it was necessary to deviate from it.

practical in utilizing every cubic foot of cargo space available but prevents access to much of the cargo until the ship is unloaded.

Highest priority items for combat unit loading vary somewhat with the nature and problems of a particular operation. Relative priorities must be worked out with minute care. The responsibility for handling this was given to a Marine officer designated transport quartermaster (TQM) aboard each amphibious assault ship. He had to know not only the weight and dimensions of each item of Marine gear carried but had to familiarize himself with the characteristics of the particular ship to which he was assigned: exact location and dimensions of all holds and storage spaces in terms of both cubic feet and deck space. This familiarity required at times accurate remeasurement of holds and loading spaces as modifications, not shown in the ship's plans, had often been made in the ship's internal structure. Initially, the *Tentative Landing Operations Manual* directed that the TQM should be an officer of the unit embarked, but such were the variations in ships that it subsequently proved more feasible to assign a Marine officer, thoroughly familiar with Marine gear, permanently to a particular ship with which he would become equally familiar through experience.

Practical experience with combat loading between 1935 and 1941 generally confirmed the soundness of the doctrines set forth in the *Tentative Landing Operations Manual.* Application of these doctrines in the fleet landing exercises was limited, however, by several factors, chiefly the lack of suitable transports. In addition, an uncertainty at times as to ports of embarkation and dates of availability of ships sometimes entangled planning procedures. As a result, there was no ideal approximation of wartime combat loading.

SHORE PARTY

One of the most serious problems encountered in early landing exercises was congestion on the beaches as men and supplies piled ashore. To keep such a situation reasonably in hand requires a high degree of control; control difficult to achieve under such circumstances, even when the enemy remains only simulated. Assault troops must push inland with all speed not only to expand the beachhead, but also to make room for following units and equipment to land and to provide space in which personnel assigned strictly beach functions can operate.

To solve this problem the *Tentative Landing Operations Manual* provided for a beach party, commanded by a naval officer called a beachmaster, and a shore party, a special task organization, commanded by an officer of the landing force. The beach party was assigned primarily naval functions, *e. g.*, reconnaissance and marking of beaches, marking of hazards to navigation, control of boats, evacuation of casualties, and, in addition, the unloading of material of the landing force from the boats. The shore party was assigned such functions as control of stragglers and prisoners, selecting and marking of routes inland, movement of supplies and equipment off the beaches, and assignment of storage and bivouac areas in the vicinity of the beach. The composition and strength of the shore party were not set forth except for a statement that it would contain detachments from some or all of the following landing force units: medical, supply, working details, engineers,

military police, communications, and chemical. The beach party and the shore party were independent of each other, but the *Tentative Landing Operations Manual* enjoined that the fullest cooperation be observed between the beachmaster and the shore party commander, and the personnel of their respective parties.

It was not indicated from what source "working details" for the shore party would come, but in practice, since there was no other source, the policy of assigning units in reserve the responsibility for furnishing the labor details quickly developed. This in effect, however, temporarily deprived the commander of his reserve.

No realistic test of the shore and beach party doctrine took place during the early fleet landing exercises. Although some material was landed on the beach, it generally consisted of rations and small quantities of ammunition and gasoline. Not until 1941 were adequate supplies available and the maneuvers on a large enough scale to provide a test of logistic procedures. The results were not encouraging. "In January of 1941 . . . the shore party for a brigade size landing . . . consisted of one elderly major and two small piles of ammunition boxes," wrote a Marine officer who "suffered" through those years. "The ship-to-shore movement of fuel was a nightmare. We had no force level transportation, [no] engineers and no supporting maintenance capability worthy of the name. In short, the combination of the parsimonious years and our own apathy had left us next to helpless where logistics were concerned." [29]

Major General H. M. Smith, the landing force commander at the New River exercise in the summer of 1941, reported that "considerable delay in the debarkation of troops and supplies was caused by lack of personnel in the Shore and Beach Parties . . . . Roughly, the supplies except for subsistence it was possible to land . . . were insufficient to sustain the forces engaged for more than three days." [30]

General Smith, who had a deep respect for logistics, was determined to correct these deficiencies. "It is evident," he reported to Rear Admiral Ernest J. King, Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, "that special service troops (labor) must be provided for these duties in order to prevent reduction of the fighting strength of battalion combat teams . . . . The present doctrine results in divided authority between shore party commanders." He recommended that "the beach and shore party commanders be consolidated into one unit, a Shore Party, under control of the landing force." [31]

Solution to the problem of divided authority came from a joint board of Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard officers appointed by Admiral King. Its recommendations closely followed those of General Smith and were accepted *in toto* and published on 1 August 1942 as *Change 2* to *FTP 167*. The principal changes were: (1) joining together of the beach and shore parties under the title Shore Party, as a component of the landing force; (2) designating the beach party commander as the assistant to the shore party commander and his advisor on

[29] BriGen V. H. Krulak ltr to ACofS, G–3, HQMC, 5Mar57.

[30] CG LantPhibFor PrelimRept to CinCLant on New River Exercise 4–12Aug41, 27Aug41.

[31] *Ibid.*

naval matters; and (3) transferring the responsibility for unloading boats at the beach from the naval element to the landing force element of the shore party.[32]

Marine Corps Headquarters solved the labor force problem by adding a pioneer (shore party) battalion of 34 officers and 669 enlisted men to the marine division.[33] This change occurred on 10 January 1942, too late for the personnel concerned to gain practical experience in large-scale exercises in the techniques of handling vast quantities of supplies or to test the adequacy of the strength and organization provided. At Guadalcanal this lack came close to having serious consequences.[34]

General Smith was not content merely to submit his shore party recommendations to Admiral King. At his direction, the logistics staff of the Amphibious Force Atlantic Fleet prepared a detailed Standing Operating Procedure (SOP) covering all phases of logistics. Issued as Force General Order No. 7–42, SOP for Supply and Evacuation, it served as the basic guide to combat loading and shore party operations during the Guadalcanal operation.[35]

By 7 December 1941 the Marine Corps had made long strides towards amphibious preparedness. It had a doctrine which had been tested in maneuvers and found to be basically sound. Many of the errors in implementation had been recognized and corrected; still others were awaiting remedial action when war broke out. But the simulated conditions of the maneuver ground were now to be abandoned. The Marines and their doctrine were now to submit to the ultimate test of war.

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] Marine Corps T/O D–94, 10Jan42.

[34] See Part VI of this history.

[35] Krulak, *op. cit.;* Twining, *op. cit.*

Development of Landing Craft

INTRODUCTION

The amphibious warfare doctrine laboriously developed by Marines between the two World Wars could never have been successfully executed without special equipment to transport the assaulting troops and their supplies from ship to shore and to land them on an enemy-defended beach.

No one was more aware of the need for such equipment than the Marines. Shortly after the end of World War I they induced the Navy to undertake design studies on two landing craft, one for personnel and one for materiel. Troop Barge A, as the first of these types was called, was tried out at Culebra in the winter of 1923–24. A shallow draft, twin-engined, 50-foot craft with a rated speed of about 12 knots and a carrying capacity of 110 fully equipped Marines, it had good beaching qualities and could retract from the beach with aid of a stern anchor. Three years later the second type, a 45-foot artillery lighter, was built and tested. Equipped with two parallel hinged ramps in the stern, it could be beached successfully stern-to and 155mm guns and other pieces of heavy Marine equipment unloaded. It lacked a power plant, however, and had to be towed by another craft.[1]

Another item of equipment tried out in 1924 was the Christie "amphibian tank." Afloat, this unusual machine was driven by twin-screw propellers at a rated speed of seven knots. On short, as a tractor, it could make 15 mph; or, where good roads were available, the demountable tracks could be removed, and on wheels it could do 35 mph. It functioned well enough on land and in the sheltered waters of rivers. But in the open sea, under conditions that must be realistically anticipated for an assault landing, it proved so unseaworthy that the Marine Corps directed its attention to other types.

The construction of these types of amphibious equipment constituted a beginning, however humble, towards the solution of the problem of transporting troops and equipment from ship to shore. But a shortage of funds made it impossible to follow up these developments until 1935, when appropriations became more plentiful as a result of the naval expansion program begun in the first Roosevelt administration.

LANDING BOATS

With the publication of the *Tentative Landing Operations Manual* in 1934 and the resumption of landing exercises the following year, work on the landing craft

[1] LtGen K. E. Rockey ltr to ACofS, G–3, 21Jun57; 2dLt W. B. Trundle rept on experiments with Beetle Boat to CG, MarCorExpedFor, 3Mar24; Senior Member, BoatCom ltr to Pres, MCEB, 21Jul36, both in War Plans Sec HQMC files, folder "Landing Boats and Barges, 1924–1939," hereinafter cited as *War Plans Files, 1924–39*.

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was resumed. Three types of boats for landing operations were contemplated by Marine planners of the mid-thirties. These included fast, small, surf boats to lift the leading waves; standard Navy boats and life boats of merchant vessels for the bulk of troops; and barges and lighters for heavy material.[2]

Steps to solve the first problem, provision of special troop landing boats, were initiated in 1935. The Marine and Navy officers who tackled the problem that year had to start pretty much from scratch, for Troop Barge A, a promising early development, fell victim to the size and weight restrictions imposed by naval ships in those days. Navy thinking and planning for the development of amphibious equipment was restricted by the types of ships then serving the fleet. Troop transports were practically nonexistent, so it was planned as an emergency measure to lift Marine landing forces in battleships and cruisers. A length of 30 feet, the size of davits on these ships, and a weight of five tons which was the maximum capacity of the davits, were therefore imposed as basic requirements for all new landing craft.

In an effort to explore the suitability of existing commercial craft for landing operations, the Navy, at the request of the Marine Corps, agreed to test as wide a variety of small craft from the yards of private builders as the limited funds available would permit. Bids were advertised, and nine replies were received, four of which met with the approval of the Marine Corps Equipment Board and were accepted.[3]

Tests of these approved types were conducted at Cape May, New Jersey, in the summer of 1936. But the experiments fell short of the original intention, "to test as wide a variety of forms as was practicable," because Andrew Higgins, a New Orleans boat builder with a promising design, declined to submit a bid. In 1926 Higgins had designed a special shallow draft craft called the *Eureka* for the use of trappers and oil drillers along the lower Mississippi and Gulf coast. It had a tunnel stern to protect the propeller and a special type of bow, called by Higgins a "spoonbill," which enabled it to run well up on low banks and beaches and retract easily. In 1934 the inventor had visited Quantico to interest Marines in his boat, and the Navy was now particularly anxious to test it with other comparable types of small craft.[4]

The four boats which showed up at Cape May for the test were of two general types. The sea skiff, a boat employed by Atlantic coast fishermen, was represented by the Bay Head, Red Bank, and Freeport boats. This type appeared in theory to offer a solution to the landing craft problem, as it was normally launched and landed through the heavy surf of the Atlantic beaches in fishery work. The other boat, a sea sled built by the Greenport Basin and Construction Company, was a high speed craft not normally employed in surf nor landed on beaches. The test board, comprising representatives of the Navy general line, Bureau of Construction and Repair, Bureau of Engineering, the Coast Guard, and the Marine Corps, reported that none of the boats were wholly satisfactory. They eliminated the sea sled en-

[2] CMC to Chief BuC&R, 24Nov36, 2d endorsement to CominCh ltr to CNO, 14Oct36, *War Plans Files, 1924–39*.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Asst Chief BuC&R ltr to Higgins Industries, 21Oct36, S82–3 (15) BuShips files.

EXPERIMENTAL AMPHIBIAN TRACTOR *developed for the Marine Corps in 1924 began the long line of test vehicles that culminated in the LVT. (USMC 13562)*

AN EARLY VERSION OF THE LANDING CRAFT *used in World War II which resulted from joint Navy-Marine Corps experiments in the 1920's and 30's. (USMC 515227)*

tirely and recommended that the three remaining craft be modified and sent to the Fleet for further tests.[5]

These tests took place at Culebra during Flex 4 in the winter of 1938. Though superior in speed and beaching ability to standard Navy boats, the modified fishing craft still had serious drawbacks. Owing to their exposed rudders and propellers

[5] CMC to Chief BuC&R, 24Nov36, 2d endorsement to Cominch ltr to CNO, 14Oct36, *War Plans Files, 1924–39.*

they tended to dig in when retracting. They were so high forward that Marines debarking had to drop 10 feet from the bow to the beach. They were, moreover, all unsuitable for lowering and hoisting.[6]

In the light of the drawbacks revealed by tests, the Bureau of Construction and Repair undertook the construction of a boat embodying all the best features of the fishing craft.[7] This was the beginning of a long and unsuccessful effort by the Bureau to develop a satisfactory landing craft. The "Bureau Boat" in various forms showed up regularly at Fleet Landing Exercises from 1939 through 1941, but efforts to get the "bugs" out of its design were abandoned in 1940.

Experiments with standard Navy ships' boats proceeded simultaneously with the development of special types. From the first they proved unsatisfactory. After five of them foundered in a four-foot surf at San Clemente during Flex 3, efforts to adapt standard Navy boats for beach landings were abandoned. The fact was that, having been designed for other purposes, none of them were suitable for beaching operations. As the Commanding Officer of the 5th Marines concluded: "Navy standard boats are totally unsuited for landing troops of the leading waves, even under moderate surf conditions. They are in no sense tactical vehicles, lacking in speed and maneuverability and are extremely difficult to handle in surf. They do not permit the rapid debarkation of troops at the water's edge." [8]

By 1938 a beginning had been made towards the solution of the landing craft problem. As a result of the early experiments the Marines had proved to their own satisfaction what they had suspected all along—that none of the standard Navy boats could be adapted satisfactorily for the landing through surf of troops or heavy equipment. Nor were the experimental models based on commercial craft, though superior to Navy boats, a satisfactory means for landing of assault waves on a defended beach. These results, though negative in character, at least cleared the way for concentrating development on specially designed landing craft.

The fruitful line of development came into view with the re-entrance of Andrew Higgins into the picture. In October 1936, about a year after declining to bid on the experimental landing boat contract, Higgins had written the Navy offering his *Eureka* as a troop landing craft. As funds for the purchase of experimental boats had been exhausted, the Navy was unable to purchase the Higgins craft at that time.[9]

A year later Commander Ralph S. McDowell, who was responsible for landing craft development in the Bureau of Construction and Repair, learned of the *Eureka* boat. He wrote Higgins inviting him to visit the Navy Department and discuss this boat if he ever came to Washington. Higgins and his naval architect

[6] CG 1st MarBrig Flex 4 Rept, 12Mar38; BriGen V. H. Krulak ltr to Head HistBr, G-3, HQMC, 1Feb57, w/attached comments.

[7] CMC to Chief BuC&R, 24Nov36, 2d endorsement to Cominch ltr to CNO, 14Oct36, *War Plans Files, 1924–39.*

[8] CO 5th Mar Flex 3 Rept, 26Feb37.

[9] Asst Chief BuC&R ltr to Higgins Industries, 21Oct36, S82-3 (15) BuShips files.

caught the first train for Washington. They spent about a week in McDowell's office working out a conversion of the standard *Eureka* into a landing craft. As funds for the purchase of experimental boats had been exhausted, the Navy Department at first refused to purchase the Higgins craft. But after the inventor offered to build a boat for less than cost, the Department relented, found the necessary funds, and gave Higgins a contract for one boat. Higgins delivered it to Norfolk in 30 days.[10]

The *Eureka* was tested in surf at Hampton Roads in the spring of 1938[11] and made its first maneuver appearance at Flex 5 in 1939 where it competed against several Bureau boats and the by now venerable fishing craft. Marines were enthusiastic about its performance. "The Higgins boat gave the best performance under all conditions. It has more speed, more maneuverability, handles easier, and lands troops higher on the beach," reported the commanding officer of the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines. "It also has greater power in backing off the beach; not once was the boat observed having difficulty in retracting."[12]

Lieutenant Commander R. B. Daggett, the representative of the Bureau of Construction and Repair at Flex 5, did not share the Marines' enthusiasm for the Higgin's *Eureka*. "The Higgins . . . boat is too heavy. . . . The speed is too slow. . . . All the Higgins boats have 250 horsepower with accompanying excessive gasoline consumption for the speed obtained,"[13] he reported to his bureau.

Daggett's preference was for a modified Bureau boat built by the Welin Company. The other Bureau types and the fishing boats he found unsatisfactory, and as the Marine Corps and the Bureau were in agreement, on this point at least, these craft were discarded.

Neither the Marine Corps nor the Bureau of Construction and Repair was to have the last word at Flex 5. The Commander Atlantic Squadron, as represented by his Landing Boat Development Board, recommended further tests for the Bureau and *Eureka* craft. Accordingly at Flex 6 the following year the drama was reenacted. Again the Marines declared the *Eureka* to be "the best so far designed." The Atlantic Squadron, shifting slightly from dead center, decided that the Higgins "was the best all-around boat for the purpose intended . . . [but] the Bureau was almost as good."[14]

By 1940 money for naval purposes was beginning to be more plentiful, and the Navy was now willing to purchase landing

[10] Capt Ralph S. McDowell, USN, interview by HistBr, G–3, HQMC, 19Jun57; Asst Chief BuC&R ltr to Higgins Industries, 21Oct36, S82–3 (15) BuShips files.

[11] LCdr G. H. Bahm ltr to CNO, 7Jun38, S82–3 (15) BuShips files.

[12] CO 1/5 Flex 5 Rept No 14 to CG 1st MarBrig, 15Mar39.

[13] LCdr R. B. Daggett memo to Chief BuC&R, 13Feb39, encl to Chief BuC&R ltr to CNO, 16Feb39, *War Plans Files, 1924–39.*

[14] Comments & Recommendations of Umpires and Observers, Flex 6, January-March 1940; Experimental Landing Boat Group Officer ltr to ComLantRon, 10Mar40, *War Plans Files, 1940–41.*

craft in quantity. But in view of the fact that the Fleet was unable to make a clear-cut recommendation for either the Bureau or Higgins types, the Navy let contracts for the first 64 landing craft on a fifty-fifty basis.[15]

The question was finally settled in September 1940. The Navy was now converting large merchant ships for use as troop transports. These ships were equipped with davits capable of handling 36-foot boats, and as the *Eureka* of 36-foot length had twice the capacity of the 30-footer then in service and could make the same speed without an increase in horsepower, the Navy decided to adopt the larger as standard.[16]

After five years of work the Marines finally had the landing craft they wanted. The one feature that kept the Higgins boat from fulfilling the ideal that they had built up in their minds was the difficulty of emptying it on the beach: all troops, equipment, and supplies had to be unloaded over the fairly high sides. During a visit to Quantico in April 1941, Higgins was shown a picture of a Japanese landing craft with a ramp in the bow by Major Ernest E. Linsert. Higgins became enthusiastic about the idea and returned to New Orleans determined to examine the possibility of installing a ramp in the bow of his 36-foot *Eureka*. Linsert, who was serving as Secretary, Marine Corps Equipment Board, recommended to the President of the Board, Brigadier General Emile P. Moses, that the Marine Corps procure a ramp-bow 36-foot *Eureka*. Upon receiving the approval of Marine Corps Headquarters, Moses and Linsert went to New Orleans to assist Higgins, who had agreed to make a prototype, converting a standard 36-foot *Eureka* into a ramp-bow boat at his own expense.

On 21 May, informal tests were conducted on Lake Pontchartrain. The new craft proved to be seaworthy. She beached and retracted with ease, and while on the beach the ramp was lowered and personnel and a light truck were debarked and reembarked. On the recommendation of the Navy Department Continuing Board for the Development of Landing Boats,[17] a special board of Marine Corps and Bureau of Ships officers was appointed to conduct official acceptance tests. With General Moses as senior member the board carried out the tests during the first week in June. The ramp-bow craft passed with flying colors.[18]

Thus was born the precursor of the LCVP (landing craft vehicle, personnel), the craft which, in the opinion of General H. M. Smith, " . . . did more to win the war in the Pacific than any other single piece of equipment." [19]

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[15] DeptContBd for Dev of Landing Boats Rept to CNO, 18May40, and BuShips ltr to Cdt 5th Naval Dist, 8Jul40, both C-S82-3(15) BuShips files.

[16] CNO ltr to Chief BuShips, 23Sep40, 2455-130-60 HQMC files.

[17] This board had been created by SecNav on 12Jan37 to coordinate landing craft development. It was composed of representatives of the CNO, BuC&R, BuEng, and MarCorps.

[18] LtCol E. E. Linsert interview by HistBr, HQMC, 3Jun57, hereinafter cited as *Linsert interview;* BriGen E. P. Moses msg to CMC, w/ endorsements, 21May41, 2455-130-60 HQMC files; MajGen E. P. Moses ltr to ACofS, G-3, HQMC, 11Apr57; CNO ltr to CMC *et al*, 2Jun41, 2455-130-60 HQMC files.

[19] Gen H. M. Smith, *Coral and Brass* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), 72.

LIGHTERS AND BARGES

The design of a successful tank lighter proved a longer and more difficult process than did the development of the personnel landing craft. The old 45-foot artillery lighter, developed in 1927, was considered to have a limited usefulness for landing heavy equipment in the later stages of an operation, but the Marine Corps hoped to obtain a lighter, self-propelled craft particularly suited to landing tanks during the early stages.[20]

As a stop-gap measure, Marines at Quantico came up with a device to adapt the standard Navy 50-foot motor launch for landing light vehicles and artillery. "Boat Rig A," this contraption was called. It consisted of a platform fitted within the hull of the boat, together with a portable ramp by means of which the vehicle could go ashore over the bow when the craft beached. The ramp was carried into the beach broken down, where it was assembled and hitched up for debarkation. This completed, it would be disengaged and left on the beach to accommodate the next boat coming in. The ramp could be assembled and made ready for use by eight men in about 10 minutes. On subsequent trips, it took about four minutes to connect the ramp to the boat. Under ideal conditions vehicles up to five tons in weight could be landed from a 50–foot motor launch using Boat Rig A. In calm water Boat Rig A worked fairly well, but when it was tried out at Culebra in 1935, it proved so top heavy that it nearly capsized in a moderate swell. The experiment was accordingly written off.[21]

With the failure of Boat Rig A, the Marine Corps turned its attention to developing a self-propelled lighter designed specifically for landing tanks and heavy equipment through the surf. In December 1935 the Commandant requested the Bureau of Construction and Repair to design such a craft. It was to be capable of landing the 9,500–pound Marmon-Herrington tank which the Marine Corps was then considering. Negotiations dragged on for more than a year, until in April both the Marine Corps and the Bureau had agreed upon a design. A 38–foot craft, it made its first appearance at a fleet landing exercise in 1938.[22] The Marines reported it to be "a distinct improvement over previous experimental designs. It is self-propelled, has sufficient speed, and is sound and practicable in construction. It is equally adaptable for landing artillery and is an efficient cargo carrier." [23]

A 40-footer, built at the Norfolk Navy Yard in the autumn of 1938, showed up at Culebra the following winter for Flex 5. It was used successfully in transporting ashore tanks and trucks of the types then standard in the Marine Corps. Under the conditions encountered at Culebra in 1939, both the 38- and 40-foot lighters were judged to be ". . . good sea boats, handle well, have sufficient power and speed, and are capable of retracting themselves from the beach by use of their stern anchors. . . . Both types . . . proved suitable for landing tanks and motor vehicles. The new

[20] CMC to Chief BuC&R, 24Nov36, 2d endorsement to Cominch ltr to CNO, 14Oct36, *War Plans Files, 1924–39.*

[21] *Marines and Amphibious War*, 47; *Tentative Landing Operations Manual*, 78–80.

[22] CMC ltr to Chief BuC&R, 19Dec35, S82–3(16) BuShips files; Senior Member, BoatCom ltr to Pres, MCEB, 21Jul36; CNO ltr to Chief BuC&R, 8Jul36; CMC ltr to Chief BuC&R, 17Apr37; Chief BuC&R ltr to Cdr R. H. English, 7Apr37, all in *War Plans Files, 1934-39.*

[23] CG 1st MarBrig Flex 4 Rept, 12Mar38.

lighter proved superior to the old in respect to ease and safety of loading in a seaway as well as cargo-carrying capacity." [24]

All tank lighter experiments conducted up to the end of Flex 5 had been built around the Marmon-Herrington tank. This vehicle, adopted by the Marine Corps in 1935, had been designed to fit within the weight limitations imposed by the Navy for amphibious equipment. Lightness was just about the only virtue possessed by this tank. By 1939 the Marine Corps had given up on it and was testing the Army light tank for its suitability in amphibious operations. As the Army tank weighed about 15 tons, it could not be carried in any of the tank lighters then in existence. The Navy accordingly produced a new model 45-feet in length, capable of carrying one Army and two Marmon-Herrington tanks.[25]

One of the new 45-footers was completed in time for a trial at Culebra during the winter of 1940 in Flex 6. The tests lacked somewhat in realism, however, because none of the Army-type tanks were available. The new lighter performed adequately as a carrier of the Marmon-Herrington tank, for other vehicles, and miscellaneous heavy equipment. At the end of Flex 6, General Smith recommended to the Commandant that ". . . . 20 of the 45-foot lighters be constructed, at the earliest practicable date, for use by the Atlantic Squadron in landing operations." [26]

In the fall of 1940 the Navy contracted for the construction of 96 45-foot tank lighters. After the contract had been awarded, doubt arose as to the seaworthiness of the basic design. During a landing exercise in the Caribbean, one of the 45-footers capsized and sank when the Army-type tank it was carrying shifted to one side in a moderate sea.[27]

In the spring of 1941 the Marine Corps found itself in urgent need of all the lighters it could lay its hands on for use in a proposed amphibious landing in the Azores.[28] None of the 96 lighters ordered by the Navy had been delivered, and not more than eight or ten were expected in time for the operation. Therefore, on 27 May 1941 the Navy Department Continuing Board for the Development of Landing Boats recommended that Higgins be given an opportunity to convert one of his 45-foot *Eureka* boats into a tank lighter by installing a ramp in the bow. If this craft met service tests he would be awarded a contract for 50 tank lighters. The Secretary of the Navy gave his approval on 29 May, and Higgins received this order by telephone the next day.[29]

Higgins rushed through the conversion, completing it in time for testing and acceptance during the first week in June by the same board of Marine Corps and Bu-

[24] CO 1/5 Flex 5 Rept No 14 to CG 1st MarBrig, 15Mar39.

[25] BuC&R ltr to Cdt Norfolk Navy Yard, 6Jul39, *War Plans Files, 1940–41.*

[26] CG 1st MarBrig ltr to CMC, 29Apr40, *War Plans Files 1940–41.*

[27] ComLantRon ltr to CNO, 13Dec40, 2455–130–60 HQMC files; Senate Report No. 10, Part 16, Additional Report of the Special Committee Investigating the National Defense Program, 78th Congress, 2d Session, hereinafter cited as *Senate 10.*

[28] See Part I, Chap 5 of this history.

[29] CNO ltr to CMC *et al*, 2Jun41, 2455–130–60 HQMC files; *Senate 10*, 139; Capt R. B. Daggett, USN, interview by HistBr, G–3, HQMC, 20May57, hereinafter cited as *Daggett Interview.*

reau of Ships officers who had come to New Orleans to test the 36-foot ramp-bow *Eureka*. At the New River exercises that summer the Higgins tank lighters proved to be of excellent basic design. "They were found to be fast, subject to ready control and retraction, relatively light, and equipped with a reliable power plant," reported General Smith.[30] They also proved to be too hastily constructed. The ramps were so weak that several collapsed, and the sill was too high for efficient handling of vehicles. Higgins, who was present, was confident that he could correct the deficiences.[31]

Before the reports of the New River exercises had been received by the Navy Department, a contract had been let for 131 additional tank lighters. These were of a 47-foot Bureau design, a prototype of which had never been built. As a result of the good showing of the Higgins tank lighter at New River, this contract was later reduced to ten. Higgins was the low bidder, and built one craft to Bureau specifications, although he was convinced that the design was unseaworthy. His fears proved to be well founded when the tests were carried out. By this time, however, the tank lighter program had again changed direction.[32]

On 4 October 1941, the Auxiliary Vessels Board of the Navy had reported that there was no lighter capable of landing the newly developed Army 30-ton medium tank. The Secretary of the Navy directed the Bureau of Ships to remedy this deficiency. Accordingly, in December existing tank lighter contracts were changed to provide 50-footers in lieu of the 45-foot Higgins and 47–foot Bureau types still to be built. Both Higgins and the Bureau produced designs of 50-foot craft. Before any deliveries could be made, President Roosevelt, at a White House Conference on 4 April 1942, directed the procurement of 600 additional 50-foot tank lighters by 1 September for the North African operation. The Bureau of Ships, to meet this commitment, ordered 1,100 of its own design.[33]

Since this order was earmarked for service in a projected Army operation, the Army showed keen interest in a test of the two types held near Norfolk on 25 April 1942. Each carried a 30-ton tank, elaborately lashed down in the Bureau lighter, merely blocked in place in the Higgins. Wind velocity ran 18 to 23 miles per hour, with wave heights estimated between 1½ and 2 feet. Both lighters showed a speed of 10 miles an hour over a measured 1½-mile course. What happened after that is described by the Army observer who made the trip in the Higgins type:

> As we neared the [antisubmarine] net it became apparent that the Navy Bureau-type tank lighter was in trouble. She appeared to have a tendency to dive when headed into the seas and was taking considerable water aboard. She stopped several times and members of the crew could be seen manning hand pumps and attempting to better secure the tank in the lighter. Once when under way and making a wide turn, it appeared that the lighter was going to overturn. Some of the crew was seen straddling the higher bulwark and the coxswain had left the pilot house and was steering the vessel from the rail.
>
> While this was going on, our [Higgins] lighter was standing by, as was a picket boat and two

[30] CG PhibLant ltr to CinCLant, 9Sep41, FMFLant files.

[31] CNO ltr to CMC *et al*, 2Jun41, 2455–130–60 HQMC files; *Daggett Interview; Linsert Interview;* CinCLant ltr to CNO, 7Oct41, FMFLant files.

[32] *Senate 10*, 139–140.

[33] *Ibid.*, 157.

Higgins 36-foot boats. None of these vessels was experiencing any difficulty. The Higgins tank lighter was maneuvering around in sharp turns into the sea, through the wave troughs.

We then [after Bureau lighter turned back] opened the engines up to 1,900 r. p. m. and proceeded past Little Creek to Fort Storey. The lighter took no water except a little spray. Performance was excellent in all respects. The lighter was beached in the surf and the tank ran off onto the beach despite poor handling by the coxswain who finally allowed the lighter to broach to. In spite of this the vessel had such power and retraction qualities [as] to get back into deep water.

As far as comparison of characteristics of the types of tank lighters are concerned, it may be stated that in the May 25 tests there was no comparison. . . .[34]

As a result of these tests, the Bureau hastily notified all yards to shift to the Higgins type. Thus the Higgins 50-footer became the standard tank lighter of the Navy, the prototype of the LCM (landing craft, mechanized) as the Marines knew it in World War II, and as they know it today in enlarged form.

AMPHIBIOUS VEHICLES

Another vehicle which was to play a vital role in the amphibious operations of World War II was the amphibian tractor (amtrack, LVT). It was built in 1935 by Donald Roebling, a wealthy young inventor living in Clearwater, Florida. The "Alligator," as Roebling called his creation, was a track-laying vehicle which derived its propulsion afloat from flanges fixed to the tracks, essentially the principle of early paddle-wheel steamships. Originally intended as a vehicle of mercy, for rescue work in the Everglades, the "Alligator" was destined for fame as an instrument of war.

[34] *Ibid.*, 163.

The Marine Corps first took notice of the "Alligator" in 1937, when Rear Admiral Edward C. Kalbfus, Commander, Battleships, Battle Force, U. S. Fleet, showed Major General Louis McCarthy Little, then commanding the Fleet Marine Force, a picture of the strange vehicle appearing in *Life* magazine. General Little was quick to grasp its potentialities and sent the picture and accompanying article to the Commandant. He, in turn, passed it along to the Equipment Board at Quantico.[35]

The Marine Corps had not forgotten the old Christie amphibian, of such bright promise and disappointing performance. Here appeared to be a possible answer. The Board dispatched its secretary, then Major John Kaluf, to Florida to see the vehicle perform and to consult with Mr. Roebling. Kaluf was favorably impressed, and on this basis the Equipment Board reported to the Commandant that ". . . subject boat has possibilities for use in landing troops and supplies at points not accessible to other types of small boats." In May 1938 the Commandant cited this opinion in recommending to the Navy that ". . . steps be taken to procure a pilot model of this type of amphibious boat for further tests under service conditions and during Fleet Landing Exercise No. 5."[36]

Both the Navy Board and the Bureau of Construction and Repair endorsed the recommendation unfavorably on the grounds of economy. The boat develop-

[35] *Linsert Interview;* LtCol V. J. Croizat, "The Marines' Amphibian," *MC Gazette*, June 1953, 42–43 (Croizat takes his information from Linsert).

[36] CMC ltr to Senior Member, NavDept ContBd for Dev of Landing Boats, 18May38, *War Plans Files, 1924–39.*

ment program was at last well under way, and it seemed unwise to divert any of the limited appropriations to a purely experimental project. CNO concurred in the recommendation of the Board.[37]

Marine interest in the amphibian tractor persisted, however, and in October 1939, General Moses visited Roebling at his shop in Clearwater, Florida. He inspected the latest model tractor, and persuaded Roebling to design a model including desired military characteristics.[38]

In January 1940, Roebling had completed the new design. An appropriation was secured from the Bureau of Ships, and work started on the first military model of an amphibian tractor. In November the completed machine was delivered at Quantico where it was demonstrated for the Commandant and a large party of high ranking officers of the Army and Navy.[39] It measured up in every respect save one. Its aluminum construction was not considered rugged enough for hard military use. Still the tractor was so impressive in every other respect that the Navy contracted with Roebling for 200 of the machines constructed of steel. As Roebling did not have the facilities for mass manufacture, he subcontracted the actual construction to the Food Machinery Corporation which had a plant in nearby Dunedin. The first vehicle, now designated LVT(1) (Landing Vehicle Tracked), came off the assembly line in July 1941.[40]

Quantity procurement of LVT(1) did not halt further development of amphibian tractors. By October 1941, the prototype of LVT(2) had put in an appearance, but volume production of the new model was delayed by the entry of the United States into the war. To achieve maximum output, the design of LVT(1) was "frozen" shortly after Pearl Harbor and the vehicle put into mass production.[41]

This early LVT(1) was unarmed, though capable of mounting machine guns. The Marines, now that they had made a start, wanted something more: an armored, turreted model capable of mounting at least a 37mm gun and serving as the equivalent of a seagoing tank in landing operations. At Clearwater in January 1940, Roebling sketched a turreted version of the LVT, the plans for which Major Linsert, Secretary of the Equipment Board, later completed.[42]

Nothing more was done about the armored LVT until June 1941, when the Commandant recommended that such a vehicle be developed, using the existing LVT as a basis. The new vehicle should be " . . . capable of sustained point-blank combat against shore-based weapons . . . . It should be able to approach a defended beach from the sea, land, over-run enemy weapons, destroy them, and continue operations ashore to support our ground troops." [43] Armor protection against .50 caliber machine-gun fire and an armament

[37] *Ibid.*, and endorsements thereto.

[38] Pres MCEB ltr to CMC, 29Aug40, 2455–130–20 HQMC files; *Linsert Interview;* Croizat, *op. cit.*

[39] *Linsert Interview;* Croizat, *op. cit.*

[40] Chief BuShips ltr to Cdt 5th Naval Dist., 6Dec40, 2455–130–60 HQMC files; SecNav ContBd for the Dev of Landing Vehicle, Tracked, "History of Landing Vehicle Tracked," 1Dec45, hereinafter cited as *LVT Hist.; Daggett Interview.*

[41] *LVT Hist.*

[42] Croizat, *op. cit.*

[43] CMC ltr to CNO, 27Jun41, and CNO 1st endorsement thereto to Chief BuShips, 15Jul41, 2455–130–20 HQMC files.

including a 37mm antitank gun and three .30 caliber machine guns would be required to accomplish this mission. The Chief of Naval Operations approved the project and directed the Bureau of Ships to perfect a design.

Bureau engineers began development in cooperation with Roebling and the engineers of the Food Machinery Corporation. But theirs was not to be the first armored LVT completed. Working independently and at its own expense, the Borg-Warner Corporation produced model "A," the first turreted amphibian tractor. Design work on the Roebling-Food Machinery model, LVT(A)(1) was not completed until December 1941, and the prototype did not emerge from the Food Machinery plant until June 1942. It was an LVT(2) hull mounting a 37mm gun in a standard light tank turret. It was quickly put in production, and the first vehicle rolled off the assembly line in August 1943.[44]

The craft described here were, of course, only a few of the wide variety of boats and beaching ships that performed yeoman service in all theaters during World War II. These ranged in size from the big lumbering LST (Landing Ship, Tanks, or "Large, Slow Target"), originated by the British, to the Army-developed DUKW, an amphibious truck propeller-driven afloat. But Marines played no notable part in the development of any of these, and none had appeared during the period covered by this volume. They will be described in subsequent volumes as they came to play their part in the tactical picture of Marine operations.

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[44] *LVT Hist;* Croizat, *op. cit.*

Marine Occupation of Iceland[1]

"It has been said," wrote Winston Churchill, "'Whoever possesses Iceland holds a pistol firmly pointed at England, America, and Canada.'"[2] At the time of which he wrote, the "pointed pistol" threatened most immediately the British lifeline: the northern convoy route between Great Britain and the Western Hemisphere, upon which the island kingdom was dependent for most of the materials to sustain its war effort as well as much that was needed for its very subsistence. Iceland perched on the flank of these shipping lanes, which were under heavy attack by German submarines. Hostile air and naval bases on the island would almost certainly render the northern route unusable, and put pressure, perhaps intolerable pressure, on the longer and more vulnerable southern route.

At the outbreak of the war Iceland enjoyed the status of autonomous parliamentary monarchy, sharing the same king with Denmark. When the Nazis overran the latter nation in April 1940, the Icelandic Parliament voted to take over the executive power of the Danish King and to assume control of foreign affairs. The strategic island became, for all practical purposes, a completely independent republic[3]—and a wholly defenseless one without even the pretense of an army or navy. This state of affairs gave rise to considerable concern in London and Washington, more genuine concern than it caused initially among the insular-minded Icelanders.

To the British the threat appeared very desperate indeed. Early in May they determined to occupy Iceland, and the need for speed and secrecy fused decision and action.[4] There was no time to stand on

[1] Unless otherwise noted the material in this chapter is derived from the 1st MarBrig(Prov) Rept of Activities 16Jun41–25Mar42, 26Mar42; 6th Mar(Reinf) Repts of Activities 25May–30Nov41, 13Dec41; 5th DefBn Repts of Activities 7Jun41–28Feb42, 27Feb42; Correspondence files dealing with Marine occupation of Iceland; J. L. Zimmerman, Notes and MSS on Marine occupation of Iceland (located at NRMC, Job 14051, Box 9, Folders 129–130), hereinafter cited as *Zimmerman MSS;* Gen O. P. Smith, Diary and Narrative covering the occupation of Iceland, hereinafter cited as *Smith Narrative;* S. Conn and B. Fairchild, "The Framework of Hemisphere Defense," MS of a forthcoming volume in the series *United States Army in World* War II (located at OCMH), hereinafter cited as *Hemisphere Defense;* B. Fairchild, MS chapters titled "Planning the Iceland Operation: The Army's First Task Force," "Establishing the Iceland Base Command," and "Bermuda and the North Atlantic Bases," part of a forthcoming volume of the same series; W. L. Langer and S. E. Gleason, *The Undeclared War* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), hereinafter cited as *Undeclared War.*

[2] W. S. Churchill, *The Grand Alliance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950), 138.

[3] On 16May42 the Parliament announced that Iceland would not renew its union with Denmark and in 1944 the island became in name as well as fact a republic.

[4] J. R. M. Butler, *Grand Strategy: Volume II—History of the Second World War* (London: HMSO, 1957), 262.

ceremony; despite Churchill's bland assertion that the British occupation of Iceland was effected "with the concurrence of its people," [5] they had, in fact, not been consulted beforehand. "As the attitude likely to be adopted by the Icelandic Government toward such an 'invasion' was in some doubt they were not informed of the proposed expedition." [6] Indeed the first inkling the natives had that anything out of the ordinary was afoot came when early-rising fishermen discovered a British destroyer nosing up to a jetty in the harbor of the island capital, Reykjavik. At 0620 on 10 May, a reinforced battalion of Royal Marines landed and occupied the town, moving so swiftly that it was able to seize the German Consulate before the hapless Consul could destroy his papers.

According to plan, the Royal Marines were to take the situation in hand in order to pave the way for larger occupation forces. They were relieved in ten days by a Canadian Army brigade which was first reinforced and later replaced by British units. By the time Iceland began to loom large in U. S. defense plans, the big, bleak, sparsely-populated island was occupied by nearly 25,000 British troops. Hvalfjordur, a deep inlet of the sea 30 miles north of Reykjavik, became the site of a vital naval fueling and repair base, while the principal airfields, also near the capital, were home bases for squadrons of patrol bombers that hunted the German submarines.[7]

As reverse followed reverse, however, the British increasingly felt the need for the return of their troops from Iceland to the home islands, seriously threatened with invasion and under heavy air attack. The prospect of British withdrawal caused some alarm among the Icelanders and led to diplomatic soundings of the American position.

On 18 December 1940 the Icelandic Minister of Foreign Affairs, V. Stefansson, arranged a private meeting with the U. S. Consul General, Bertel E. Kuniholm. After firm assurances that his proposal was strictly unofficial, the Minister suggested to Kuniholm that the United States might consider the possibility of declaring Iceland part of the area covered by the Monroe Doctrine, in effect joining the island to the Western Hemisphere.[8] Kuniholm duly reported the tentative proposition to Washington and nearly a month later he received a cautious reply from the Secretary of State which advised him that no action was likely to be forthcoming in the near future but that he should neither encourage nor discourage further approaches along this line.[9]

In unheralded American-British staff conversations which took place in Washington in the first months of 1941, plans were laid for Allied action in case the U. S. should be drawn into the war beside Britain. Under these plans the defense of Iceland was to become the re-

[5] Churchill, *loc. cit.*

[6] Maj D. B. Drysdale, RM, ltr to LtCol J. L. Zimmerman, 7Sep54, in *Zimmerman MSS*, Folder 130.

[7] Butler, *op. cit.*, 262, 287, 402, 469.

[8] Although the location of the eastern boundary of the Western Hemisphere is a subject of debate among geographers, most maps of this period show Iceland as clearly within the Eastern Hemisphere. Secretary Hull, however, remembered associates bringing him maps (at the time Hitler seized Denmark) which showed Greenland wholly and Iceland partly within the Western Hemisphere. *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 2 vols (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), I, 73.

[9] *Ibid.*, I, 754.

sponsibility of the United States; Army troops were to relieve the British as soon as practicable after the outbreak of war, but certainly no sooner than 1 September 1941, as the Army did not feel it would be ready to take on such a commitment until then.[10] But as the spring of 1941 wore on, American measures in aid of Britain, such as Lend-Lease and the progressive extension of the Neutrality Patrol into the mid-Atlantic, brought the U. S. closer and closer to conflict with Germany. Open and increasing support of the British seemed to suit the public mood; a survey of public opinion taken by the Gallup Poll in early May showed that an overwhelming majority (75%) of the American people favored helping Britain even if such a course was sure to lead the nation into war with Germany.[11] The stage was thus set for what one exhaustive study of this period has called an "overt act of participation in the European conflict." [12]

By late spring Britain felt her back against the wall. Churchill asked President Roosevelt to send American troops to Iceland to replace the British garrison. The President agreed provided an invitation to the American occupation force was forthcoming from the Icelandic Government. Churchill undertook to produce this invitation, but the process proved more one of extraction than of production. Icelandic reluctance to "invite" a foreign force to occupy the island very nearly upset a timetable already in operation.

On 4 June, the President ordered the Army to prepare a plan for the immediate relief of British troops in Iceland. The question of where the troops were going to come from arose immediately. Although the Army had reached a strength of nearly a million and a half men, the great bulk of its soldiers were raw recruits gathered in by Selective Service and recently called up National Guardsmen. Under existing legislation these men could not be sent beyond the Western Hemisphere unless they volunteered for such service. Equipment in nearly every category was in short supply, even for training purposes. The Army needed its comparatively small force of regulars to form cadres for new units. To withdraw these cadres for an expeditionary force would throw the whole immense training program out of gear.

A review of the Army's immediate capabilities convinced the President that the Marine Corps would have to furnish the initial occupation force for Iceland. Since all Marines, both regular and reserve, were volunteers, there were no geographical restrictions on their use. On 5 June, Roosevelt directed the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), Admiral Harold R. Stark, to have a Marine brigade ready to sail in 15 days' time. The organization of this brigade was facilitated by the fact that a reinforced infantry regiment slated for expeditionary duty was at that moment en route from the west coast to the east.

At this time the Marine Corps was heavily committed to a program of organizing, equipping, and training two divisions, one on each coast. Since the infan-

[10] M. E. Matloff and E. M. Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare—United States Army in World War II* (Washington: OCMH, 1953), 46, hereinafter cited as *Strategic Planning.*

[11] E. Roosevelt and J. P. Lash (eds.), *F. D. R.: His Personal Letters 1928–1945*, 2 vols (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1950), II, 1158.

[12] Langer and Gleason, *op. cit.*, 575.

try regiments of both divisions were still forming, they were considerably understrength, and it had been necessary to reinforce the east coast's 1st Marine Division when it was tabbed for a major role in a proposed landing operation. On 24 May, the Commandant drew on the 2d Marine Division at Camp Elliott, California, for the necessary regiment, and Colonel Leo D. Hermle's 6th Marines (Reinforced) was selected "for temporary shore duty beyond the seas." [13] The regiment was brought up to full strength by substantial drafts from the 2d and 8th Marines,[14] and on 28 May it joined its assigned reinforcing artillery, tank, and service elements. Six days after he received his orders, Colonel Hermle had his command combat loaded; the ships, three large transports and four destroyer transports, sailed from San Diego on 31 May.

When it had embarked, this regiment had orders to report to the Commanding General, I Corps (Provisional), FMF, Atlantic Fleet. At that time, its most probable mission appeared to be either the seizure of Martinique or the occupation of the Azores, both discussed in the following chapter. Momentous events, however, were developing in Europe, and these served to change the whole pattern of the war, as well as the mission of the regiment. Both British and American intelligence indicated that Hitler was getting ready to attack Russia, and soon. Such an event would automatically cancel any immediate threat to Gibraltar and render the Azores venture pointless. President Roosevelt, in fact, ordered a suspension of planning for the Azores operation on 7 June, while preparations for the movement to Iceland proceeded apace.

While the 6th Marines' convoy was still in the Pacific heading for the Panama Canal, the wheels were set in motion to complete the organization of the projected brigade. One other major unit, the 5th Defense Battalion at Parris Island, was designated for duty in Iceland; its commanding officer, Colonel Lloyd L. Leech, flew to Washington on 7 June for a two-day round of briefing and reports. The battalion's antiaircraft guns and gunners were what was wanted, so when the order assigning the 5th Defense to I Corps (Provisional) was published on 10 June the 5-inch Artillery Group was shown as being detached. In addition to the 6th Marines (Reinforced) and the 5th Defense Battalion (less 5-inch Artillery Group), the budding brigade received a company of engineers, a chemical platoon, and a platoon of scout cars from the 1st Marine Division at New River. The port for the hurried assembly of ships, materiel, and men was Charleston, S. C.

The men of the 5th Defense Battalion had some inkling of their probable area of employment; Colonel Leech's warning order phoned from Washington on the 8th had directed that special attention be paid to provision of warm clothing. On board the 6th Marines' transports, however, speculation was rife that the regiment was heading for the Caribbean, perhaps for Guantanamo Bay, but more popular was the rumored destination of Martinique. When the convoy turned north after clearing the canal, passed the western end of Cuba, and headed for Charleston most of the "scuttlebutt" still held out for a tropical objective. Need-

[13] 6th Mar (Reinf) Repts, *op. cit.*, 1.

[14] "The rule was that [these] men must have been in the service for one year and must have clear records. The other regiments 'played ball' in this respect and we received good men." *Smith Narrative*, 17.

less to say, the issue of winter clothing after the regiment arrived at Charleston on 15 June came as a real "shocker." The severely limited time to assemble and load out the Iceland force made this cold weather gear "the darndest collection of winter clothing ever assembled;" [15] there were bits and pieces of everything.

On the day following the arrival of the 6th Marines in Charleston the 1st Marine Brigade (Provisional) was formally organized; its commander was Brigadier General John Marston. The troop list included:

Brigade Headquarters Platoon
Brigade Band
6th Marines
5th Defense Battalion (less 5-inch Artillery Group)
2d Battalion, 10th Marines
Company A, 2d Tank Battalion (less 3d Platoon)
Company A, 2d Medical Battalion
Company C, 1st Engineer Battalion
1st Platoon, Company A, 2d Service Battalion
3d Platoon, 1st Scout Company
Chemical Platoon

On 18 June, General Marston arrived in Charleston from Quantico, bringing with him a small headquarters detachment and his instructions from the CNO for the operation of his brigade in Iceland. These orders, dated 16 June, gave him a simple and direct mission:

In Cooperation with the British Garrison, Defend Iceland Against Hostile Attack.[16]

The question of over-all command in Iceland had, of course, risen early in the top-level negotiations. The British wished the brigade to be placed directly under their control since they had the major force on the island, but Admiral Stark thought that it would be going too far for U. S. troops, ostensibly neutral, to be placed under the command of an officer of a belligerent power. Marston's orders, therefore, read that he would coordinate his actions "with the defense operations of the British by the method of mutual cooperation," [17] while reporting directly to the CNO.

The brigade spent a week in Charleston, most of it devoted to loading supplies that arrived from camps and depots all over the eastern half of the U. S. The Army might not be sending any troops in this first contingent, but a good portion of the weapons and equipment that went out with the Marines was taken from Army units.[18] On 22 June, the last cargo that could be handled within the time limits set was loaded and at 0800 the four transports and two cargo vessels carrying 4,095 officers and men set sail for Argentia, Newfoundland.

At sea a formidable escort force including battleships, a couple of cruisers, and ten destroyers joined up.[19] Five days out of Charleston, the convoy arrived at Argentia and hove to awaiting further orders. These orders were not forthcoming until 1 July, when the Icelandic reluctance to actually "invite" American occupation was finally compromised in a much-qualified statement by the island's Prime Minister to President Roosevelt that the presence of U. S. troops was "in accordance with the interest of Iceland." [20] This left-handed invitation was the go-ahead

[15] MajGen H. R. Paige ltr to ACofS, G–3, HQMC, February 1957.

[16] CNO Serial 069312 to CG, 1st MarBrig (Prov), 16Jun41.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] G–4 draft memo for TAG, "Transfers of Equipment to the U. S. Marine Corps," 5Jun41.

[19] U. S. Atlantic Flt OPlan F–41, 20Jun41, 1–2.

[20] Msg sent by Prime Minister Herman Jonasson of Iceland to President Roosevelt, 1Jul41.

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signal and the brigade was headed east by dawn on 2 July. The Marines were going with the blessing of Churchill who had written the President earlier that:

> I am much encouraged by . . . your marines taking over that cold place and I hope that once the first installment has arrived you will give full publicity to it. It would give us hope to face the long haul that lies ahead.[21]

The President made the desired announcement on 7 July as the convoy anchored in Reykjavik harbor, pointing out that the Americans were there "to supplement, and eventually to replace, the British forces," and that an adequate defense of the strategic island was necessary to ward off a potential threat to the Western Hemisphere.[22] A third, but unannounced, purpose of this American occupation was the acquisition of a naval and air base in Iceland to facilitate the prosecution of our antisubmarine war in the North Atlantic.[23]

While the threat of German attack was always present, the likelihood of it happening steadily lessened as the year wore on.[24] On the day that the 1st Brigade left Charleston, Germany attacked Russia. Hitler repeatedly in the months that followed indicated that he wanted to avoid provoking the U. S. into war while he concentrated on the offensive in Russia. His submarine commanders were given orders to spare American shipping as much as possible, even though it had been publicly announced that U. S. Navy vessels were affording protection to British and Canadian ships that joined American convoys headed for Iceland. Still Hitler decreed that there would be no accounting for the submarine commander who sank an American vessel by mistake. Up until the actual U. S. entry into the war this partial immunity of American vessels from attack held good.[25]

The fact that Hitler had decided to go easy on U. S. ships in the North Atlantic was naturally not known to American naval commanders. There was considerable pressure to get the brigade and its equipment unloaded in the shortest possible time and the convoy headed back for the States. This unloading proved an onerous task. There was little local labor. Marines had to furnish all working parties and the men toiled around the clock, helped not a little by the fact that at this time of year it was light 24 hours a day.

Only two ships could be docked at Reykjavik at a time and the places beside

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[21] Quoted in Hull Memoirs, *op. cit.*, II, 947.

[22] S. I. Rosenman (ed), *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 13 vols (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), X, 255–256.

[23] S. E. Morison, *The Battle of the Atlantic—September 1939–May 1943—History of the United States Naval Operations in World War II* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1947), 78, hereinafter cited as *Battle of the Atlantic*.

[24] An estimate of the situation prepared by a special board convened by the brigade shortly after its arrival in Iceland attributed to the Germans the following capabilities: To land in force from air or sea; to conduct bombing attacks; and to conduct raids by surface vessel and submarines. The board concluded, however, that as long as the British Home Fleet operated in superior numbers in the water surrounding Northern Scotland, the Orkney, Shetland, and Faroe Islands it would be impossible for the Germans to support a force of any size in Iceland. 1stMarBrig(Prov) Estimate of the Situation (Defense of Iceland), 5Aug41.

[25] "Fuehrer Conferences on Naval Affairs, 1939–1945," *Brassey's Naval Annual 1948* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), 220*ff*. See the transcripts for the conferences of 21Jun41, 9Jul41, 25Jul41, 17Sep41, and 13Nov41 for the continuity of German policy regarding American shipping.

the wharves were reserved for the cargo vessels which carried heavy equipment of the 5th Defense Battalion. The rest of the convoy rode at anchor in the harbor, while men and supplies were lightered ashore to a gently sloping pebble beach near the city. Early on 12 July the job was finished, the convoy sailed, and the Marines had their first real chance to look around them.

They drew small reassurance from what they saw. The Icelandic landscape was something less than prepossessing, at least to men raised where soil produces vegetation and a tree is a tree. No trees above dwarf height grow on Iceland's rugged, mountainous terrain, and vegetation is limited to a little sheep pasturage on the comparatively flat stretches. It has been described as the most volcanic region in the world. Craters, many of them occasionally active, pock its surface, and lava flows lace across it.

The most unpleasant thing about Iceland's weather is its very uncertainty; the mountains usually insure that the same kind of weather rarely exists simultaneously all over the island. Although the temperature range is moderate, the humidity is consistently high, and precipitation frequent but erratic. About the only constant is the assurance of steady winds, which may change abruptly to gale force.[26]

The island is slightly smaller in area than Kentucky, but barely supported a population of about 120,000 at the time of the occupation. Along its 2,300 miles of jagged coastline were a number of small fishing villages; and except for the area around Reykjavik where there was a roadnet, all communication was by sea. The prim little capital boasted about 38,000 inhabitants, two movie houses, and one first class hotel; as a liberty town for nearly 30,000 British and American troops it boasted nothing. The only living things the island had in abundance were sheep and ponies,[27] and the Marines never developed a taste for mutton and were forbidden to ride the runt-sized steeds. Altogether, it was probably good for morale that the Marines did not know at this time that they were destined to see Iceland—and nothing but Iceland—for eight dreary months to come.

Even before the first brigade unit set foot on shore, the Marines learned what the term "mutual cooperation" meant to the British. They could not have been more cordial, generous, and helpful. As the brigade was woefully short of motor transport, the British put more than 50 trucks at its disposal, together with drivers familiar with the region and the traffic problems peculiar to Iceland—and left them in the hands of the Marines for several weeks. They also furnished rations and turned over several of their permanent camps to the new arrivals, moving into tent camps to make room.[28]

The enthusiastic reception by the British included a highly prized offer by their

[26] In a hurricane on 15Jan42, wind velocities of over 125 mph were recorded. It did an enormous amount of damage. Ships were driven on the rocks and huts and other buildings which were not firmly anchored were blown away. Paige, *op. cit.*

[27] Most of the information on Iceland's climate and terrain was taken from Col L. P. Hunt, "Report of two-day reconnaissance of Iceland, June 12–13, 1941," 18Jun41.

[28] "Our reception by the British has been splendid. They have placed at our disposal all of their equipment and have rationed us for ten (10) days to cover the period of disembarkation." BriGen J. Marston ltr to MGC, 11Jul41.

commander, Major General H. O. Curtis, to provide the Marines with the distinctive polar bear shoulder insignia of the British force. General Marston accepted for the brigade and noted later that:

> The mutual cooperation directive worked, to the entire satisfaction of the British Commander and the Brigade. The British complied with our requests and we complied with theirs. It was as simple as that. A British commander less sympathetic than General Curtis might have upset the applecart but under that talented officer no incident of conflict occurred.[29]

In their new camps the Marines made their first acquaintance with the Nissen hut, an introduction that was to ripen into familiarity that rarely reached the friendship stage. In the months to come the men of the brigade were to build and maintain roads and construct defenses; they were to become very practiced at the art of the stevedore; but most of all they were to become efficient builders of the ubiquitous Nissen hut. The hut itself "was an elongated igloo covered with corrugated iron roofing and lined with beaver board" [30] designed to accommodate about 14 men. It was possible to erect several huts in combination to accommodate larger numbers of men or for use as offices, mess halls, recreation rooms, and classrooms.

For the first week ashore the Marines were fully occupied getting their camps established and then they were fitted into the British scheme of defense. Initially, the brigade's primary mission was to serve as a mobile reserve although its lack of transportation meant that most of its mobility would be dependent on foot power.[31] The various units, which were spread out over a good part of the countryside around Reykjavik, were also responsible for local defense of their bivouac areas, a responsibility that grew to include long segments of coastline when the British units defending these possible landing points were later relieved.

The machine guns and 3-inch guns of the 5th Defense Battalion were integrated into the British antiaircraft defenses around the airfield and harbor and remained a part of this system for the rest of the Marines' stay. As a result, the 5th Defense spent most of its time performing the duties for which it was constituted; its state of training was good and it improved as a result of a steady round of gun watches and drills and frequent though unproductive enemy aircraft alerts. In contrast, the men of the 6th Marines and its reinforcing units had reason to think that they were on one gigantic and never-ending working party, and the regiment labelled itself a "labor regiment" in its August report to General Marston.

A welcome break from the steady grind of labor details occurred on 16 August when Prime Minister Churchill visited Iceland en route to England following his famous Atlantic conference with President Roosevelt. He was accompanied by an imposing array of high British rank: Admiral of the Fleet Sir Dudley Pound, First Sea Lord; General John Dill, Chief of the Imperial General Staff; and Air Chief Marshal Sir Wilfred Freeman, Vice Chief of Air Staff. After paying their respects to local officials, they at-

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[29] MajGen J. Marston ltr to ACofS, G–3, HQMC, 31Jan57.

[30] *Smith Narrative*, 34.

[31] Iceland Force memo IF/168/1/G to CG, 1st MarBrig, 16Jul41; 1st MarBrig OpOrd No 3–41, 16Jul41.

tended a large joint British-American military review held in their honor. Of this event Churchill wrote later: "There was a long march past in threes, during which the tune 'United States Marines' bit so deeply into my memory that I could not get it out of my head." [32]

The reason for the continuous round of camp construction was two-fold. First, somebody had to build the camps to accommodate the expected influx of Army troops; neither the British nor the Icelanders were in a position to do so. The process of simple elimination gave the Marines the job. Second, it soon became apparent that the Marines themselves were going to stay for a while and a good part of their time had to be spent preparing their own facilities for the onset of winter.

A common, indeed, official, belief that the Marines were going to be relieved in September by Army troops held strongly for about a month after the brigade arrived in Iceland. There were numerous evidences that this was the intention of the top planners when the concept of the Marine Corps furnishing the initial occupation troops was first broached. By mid-August, however, it became evident that the Army would not be able to provide enough men to relieve the brigade and that the lack of readily available troops would make the role of those who did arrive one of reinforcement rather than relief. The British, who were supposed to return to their home islands, had to stay on to bolster the defenses. The crux of the Army's dilemma was the fact that not all of its men were available for assignment; "the passage of legislation in August 1941 permitting the retention in service of the selectees, Reserve officers, and the National Guardsmen still left the problem of restriction on territorial service—a problem which was to remain with the Army until Pearl Harbor brought a declaration of war." [33]

There was really not too much trouble taking care of the first Army contingent to arrive, a small force of about 1,000 men built around a pursuit squadron and an engineer battalion. Their convoy made port on 6 August and the units, which came under Marston's command, moved into a camp set up for them by the Marines. However, preparations for the arrival of a second Army echelon of brigade strength due in mid-September meant that every Marine available had to turn to on camp construction. It was the difficulties attendant upon the raising of this second force that led to the decision to hold the Marines in Iceland.[34]

The commander of the Army troops of the September echelon was senior to General Marston; according to the original occupation plan, the principle of unity of command was to hold in Iceland, and under it the senior officer present, regardless of service of origin, would have assumed operational control over all American troops. Acording to this concept, Army Major General Charles H. Bonesteel would simply have superseded General Marston and all hands would have carried on as before. But in the interim between June and September, the Army Chief of Staff, General George C. Mar-

[32] Churchill, *op. cit.*, 449.

[33] *Stategic Planning*, 51.

[34] AG memo to ACofS, War Plans Div, 6Sep41. In order to field the force that finally reached Iceland in September, the Army had to draw on posts and stations all over the U. S. AG WrnO to Army commanders concerned, 14Aug41 (located at TAGO).

shall, had decided that unity of command did not go far enough, at least as far as Iceland was concerned. He determined that if General Bonesteel was to have full responsibility for the American occupation, then he should also have full administrative as well as operational control over all the troops in Iceland.

Such a transfer of the Marines from Navy control could be effected by executive order, as had been done by President Wilson in the case of the Marines serving in France in World War I. Unfortunately, from the Marines' point of view, this transfer involved a great deal more than a simple change of command. It brought them under the Army's administrative and disciplinary system which differed considerably from that of the Navy and with which they were unfamiliar.

The Commandant, who had seen the system at work in World War I, protested vigorously. On 4 September he wrote Admiral Stark:

> The proposed change will not only necessitate a complete revision of this plan [unity of command] but would introduce many administrative difficulties, with no corresponding advantages in so far as command relations are concerned. A complete change of the administrative system would again be required when the First Marine Brigade is detached from the Army.[35]

And again on 5 September:

> In view of the existing situation in Iceland and the probable nature of other operations to be conducted by the Navy elsewhere, the proposed plan has many undesirable ramifications. If carried to its logical conclusion, it will mean, at best, frequently shifting Marine units from the Navy to the Army and back again, with much administrative grief. It will probably change our concept of command relations in joint operations.[36]

[35] MGC memo for Adm Stark, 4Sept41.

[36] MGC memo for Adm Stark, 5Sep41.

But it was a losing fight. Marshall stated that he had no intention of establishing a precedent and remained adamant. The Commandant did not learn of the proposed change until it was practically an accomplished fact, and the support he received from the CNO was lukewarm. The actual transfer of command took place on 24 September and General Holcomb was directed to report to the Secretary of War on all matters pertaining to the brigade.[37]

The resultant administrative difficulties did not prove to be as bad as Holcomb and many others had feared. The changeover was more of an annoyance than it was a definite hindrance; after all, as one battalion commander commented later, "while administration difficulties may be bothersome they can be handled."[38] In the course of trying to master Army procedures, General Marston wrote the Asistant Commandant:

> They have a tremendous amount of paper work which the Marine Corps seems able to avoid. The barrage of force orders coming out of staff sections is appalling. Of course we are getting along all right but it will be months before we are oriented in the new direction . . . If the future develops another situation similar to that of this Brigade in Iceland, I hope that you will be able to have the transfer deferred with at least two months notice so that the officers concerned can get themselves oriented in preparation for the jump.[39]

One of General Bonesteel's first acts as the Commanding General of the new Iceland Base Command was to send a letter of appreciation to the 1st Marine Brigade (Provisional) which extended his "sin-

[37] Presidential directive to SecWar and SecNav, 22Sep41.

[38] MajGen W. A. Worton ltr to CMC, 1Feb57.

[39] BriGen J. Marston ltr to BriGen A. A. Vandegrift, 10Oct41.

cere thanks for the splendid assistance [given] in the preparation of the various campsites and in numerous other ways prior to and during our arrival in Iceland. The amount of hard and extended labor involved is fully recognized and deeply appreciated." [40]

The onrush of winter made it necessary for all troops to devote a good part of their time to camp maintenance and weatherizing. And as supplies continued to come in for the depots being built up near Reykjavik, working parties had to be provided to empty ships as well as to construct the storehouses needed to protect the equipment. Days rapidly shortened until there were only four hours of a sort of hazy daylight to accomplish necessary functions.

With the continued requirements for camp construction and preparations for an arctic winter, the brigade was not able to conduct a satisfactory training program.

Every possible opportunity was seized by unit commanders, however, to improve the state of readiness of their men. Many of the specialists, of course, like the communicators, engineers, and service personnel received considerable on-the-job training. While large-scale exercises were not possible, small units operated together as the press of construction allowed. In particular, a considerable amount of range firing of crew-served weapons was accomplished. When the 3d Battalion of the 6th Marines was moved to a camp too far away from Reykjavik to make it feasible to use its men for working parties, the commanders of 1/6 and 2/6 agreed to alternate in furnishing working parties "in order to get in a minimum amount of training." [41] The 3d Battalion, encamped in a pass that lay right in the path of winter winds howling out of the mountains near Hvalfjordur, was forced to "button-up" for the winter almost as soon as it shifted in September.

The lack of adequate unit training has been emphasized by some critics of the Marines' employment in Iceland. Training did not stop; it was hampered and curtailed by the weather and the requirements of working details, but it did go on despite all the very real obstacles. The men, trained and indoctrinated as amphibious assault troops, however, were perturbed when they heard the news of Pearl Harbor while huddled around the stoves in their Nissen huts. Were they to be left forgotten in the wrong ocean?

Once the war broke out in earnest the Navy, too, did not view with favor the employment of a Marine Brigade on a defensive mission in Iceland. The Marines were needed in the Pacific and pressure was put on the Army to get them relieved. Plans were laid to send a convoy with 8,000 men from New York on 15 January to provide the brigade's relief and return transportation. But, like so many previous false starts, this was not to be. Several of the ships in this convoy were diverted elsewhere and the resulting troop lift was only enough to relieve one battalion. General Marston picked 3/6, which cheerfully turned over its wind-blown billets to the Army troops and embarked on 28 January. The battalion left Iceland on the 31st and reached New York on 11 February.

A start had been made and the brigade began negotiations to turn over its camps,

[40] CG, IBC ltr to CG, 1st MarBrig(Prov), 27Sep41, quoted in *Zimmerman MSS*, Folder 129.

[41] Gen O. P. Smith ltr to ACofS, G-3, 7Feb57.

defense mission, and heavy equipment to the Army. The convoy carrying the final relief put into Reykjavik on 3 March, and the Marines began loading out the following day. At 1010 on 8 March, General Marston closed his CP on shore and opened it on board the USS *McCawley*; at noon that date the brigade returned to the jurisdiction of the Navy. It is interesting to note that this is the only instance in World War II where a Marine unit was "detached for service with the Army by order of the President." In the many joint operations that followed, all services adhered to the principle of unity of command. General Bonesteel recognized the Marines' dislike for the "detached service" concept but in a final letter to General Marston commended the brigade whose "every officer and enlisted man gave his whole hearted support and cooperation to our efforts to a much greater extent than mere compliance with instructions implied." [42]

The brigade landed at New York on 25 March and was immediately disbanded. The 5th Defense Battalion was ordered to Parris Island, the 6th Marines to the Second Division at Camp Elliott, and the supporting units to their parent organizations wherever those might be.

Thus passed into history an uncomfortable and at times frustrating mission, the military value of which was not clearly apparent at the time. The Marine Corps' expansion program in late 1941 and early 1942 was admittedly hampered by the absence of such a sizeable body of well-trained regulars and reserves. The brigade had relieved no appreciable number of British troops, which had been the original purpose of the American occupation. There is no concrete evidence that the Germans ever seriously considered attacking Iceland, although it is conceivable, even if somewhat unlikely, that the knowledge of the presence of the brigade might have deterred such an attack. The military value of the Iceland occupation stemmed from rigorous service in the field. In the many scattered and detached posts, heavy responsibilities fell on the shoulders of the young company grade officers and NCOs. Adversity developed and strengthened leadership. Once the brigade reached Iceland there was a minimum rotation of officers and men. This stability of personnel gave the commanders an opportunity, seldom afforded in peacetime, to develop teamwork and unit *esprit de corps*. Upon return to the United States, almost all ranks received a promotion and all units of the brigade were drawn on heavily to provide leaders for newly activated units. The 6th Marines furnished large drafts to the raider and parachute battalions, as well as to units of the 2d Division.

The military know-how, discipline, and qualities of leadership developed in Iceland were invaluable in providing cadres of experienced Marines around which to form these new units. As a result, the 6th Regiment, which sailed from San Diego for New Zealand in late October 1942, contained only a very small percentage of "Iceland Marines." The military wealth had been shared.

[42] CG, IBC ltr to CG, 1st MarBrig(Prov), 1Mar42, quoted in *Zimmerman MSS*, Folder 130.

The Marine Corps on the Eve of War[1]

THE INEVITABLE CONFLICT: DEFENSIVE EXPANSION

While war came to Europe in September 1939, the United States did not formally enter the struggle against the Axis Powers for another 27 months. The formal declarations of war did not, however, project the nation directly from a state of isolation and indifference into active belligerency. Although the United States declared its neutrality—our aim being to avoid conflict while guarding against totalitarian penetration of the Western Hemisphere—we were gradually drawn deeper and deeper into short-of-war operations in support of Great Britain and her allies.

Initially, the Administration moved with caution. In the years following the "war to end all wars," disappointment in the League of Nation's failure and the world-wide depression of the 1930's had served to increase our isolationist tendencies. Aware of the national sentiment,[2] President Roosevelt initiated a program for gradually increasing the armed services, strengthening our bases, and developing a foundation for the expansion of our national resources and industry. On 8 September 1939, seven days after Hitler's armies crossed into Poland, the President officially declared a limited national emergency. As the rising tide of Nazi aggression swept over Europe in 1940 and 1941, Americans awakened more and more to the peril and supported increasingly the national policy of strengthening our armed forces.

As of 30 June 1939, two months before Hitler's armies launched their *Blitzkrieg*, Marine Corps strength stood at 19,432 officers and enlisted,[3] of whom 4,840 (including aviation components) were assigned to the Fleet Marine Force. FMF ground forces were organized in two units optimistically designated "brigades," each in actuality an understrength infantry regiment[4] reinforced by skeletonized supporting elements: 1st Brigade based on the east coast (Quantico), 2d Brigade on the west coast (San Diego). Each brigade had the support of a Marine aircraft group of corresponding numerical designation, and FMF aviation further boasted a scouting squadron (VMS–3) based in the Virgin Islands.

However, conversion of international tension into armed conflict in Europe resulted in a marked quickening of United

[1] Unless otherwise noted the material in this chapter is derived from *CMC AnRepts*, 1939–1941.

[2] The Roper Poll in September 1939 showed that extreme interventionist sentiment was limited to 2.5% of the total population; 37% preferred to have nothing to do with the warring nations. R. E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins, An Intimate History* (New York: Harper and Brother, 1948), 128.

[3] Table DGB–2200–DJF prepared by PersAcct Sect, RecordsBr, PersDept, HQMC, 26Nov54.

[4] 5th and 6th MarRegts of WWI fame, based on the east and west coasts respectively.

States defense efforts. And from that point on the Commandant's Annual Reports reflect a steady succession of upward revisions in personnel planning until by 30 November 1941 total strength stood at 65,881, the number, give or take a few, with which the Marine Corps would enter the war against the Axis Powers a week later at Pearl Harbor.

But of greater significance than the increase in over-all strength was the growing proportion of that strength represented by the Fleet Marine Force. Fiscal 1940 saw the numbers of the Corps' striking arm more than doubled: from 4,525 to 9,749; and this figure in turn had more than tripled by 30 November 1941, reaching 29,532. One factor largely responsible for this impressive increase was mobilization in November 1940 of the entire Organized Marine Corps Reserve, both ground and air, thus making available a large number [5] of officers and men, at least partially trained, for incorporation into the FMF with a minimum of delay.

This increased strength made possible organization of a unit larger than the Marine Corps had ever operated before: the triangular division, consisting of three infantry regiments, an artillery regiment, supported by engineer, reconnaissance, and signal units plus medical and other service troops. Thus on 1 February 1941 the brigades stationed on the east coast and west coast were officially activated as the 1st Marine Division and 2d Marine Division respectively. To effect the necessary expansion, cadres were drawn from existing units around which to build and train new units of the same type. This proved a slow and laborious process, and months passed before either division could be built up to authorized strength.

Growth of Marine Aviation kept pace with that of the ground forces, and again that pace looked faster on paper than it was in actuality. Simultaneously with the conversion of the two brigades into divisions, the east coast and west coast FMF aircraft groups, based at Quantico and San Diego respectively, were activated as the 1st and 2d Marine Aircraft Wings (MAW). But, as with the divisions, bringing them up to authorized strength proved no overnight process.

Initially, each could boast only a single aircraft group of mixed composition, designated MAG–11 and MAG–21 respectively. On the eve of Pearl Harbor, FMF air personnel numbered 2,716 officers and enlisted out of a total aviation strength of 5,911.[6] These were divided among the two wings and the detached squadron in the Virgin Islands. The 1st MAW had remained based at Quantico. But the coming of war found the 2d MAW scattered far and wide, with a squadron at Wake Island, a detachment at Midway Island, and the balance of the wing at Ewa, on Oahu, T. H.[7]

Though the two divisions and two wings comprised the Marine Corps' principal striking arm, considerations of im-

[5] Total of 5,241 officers and enlisted.

[6] The two groups were identical in composition but slightly unequal in strength. Each contained 2 fighter, 2 scout-bomber, 1 observation, and 1 utility squadrons. MAG–11 had 100 operational aircraft to 90 for MAG–21. The Virgin Islands detachment operated 8 utility-scouting planes, bringing the total of FMF aircraft of all types to 198. Altogether, Marine Aviation included 13 squadrons and 204 operational planes of all types.

[7] "Administrative History of U. S. Marine Corps in World War II" (MS in HistBr Archives), 158, hereinafter cited as *AdminHist.*

AIR EVACUATION OF WOUNDED *from Ocotal, Nicaragua was pioneered by Marine aviators who presaged the mass evacuation techniques of World War II. (USMC 5173)*

ARMY LIGHT TANK *is unloaded from its landing craft during joint Army-Marine amphibious exercises at New River, N. C. in August 1941. (SC 125129)*

mediate urgency diverted many FMF personnel into other activities. The United States had no intention of defending America on its own soil as long as the situation permitted any other choice. The Navy already possessed several outlying bases and hoped to obtain more, for security of which it relied on the Marines. Hence there evolved a type of organization specially adapted to this duty: the Marine defense battalion, which was primarily an artillery outfit whose main

armament consisted of antiaircraft and coast defense guns.[8] The first four of these, with consecutive numerical designations, were activated during fiscal 1940. By the time of Pearl Harbor the number had reached seven with two more in process of formation.[9]

Concurrent with increased numbers came increased responsibilities. The Navy, too, was expanding at an unprecedented rate, diverting more Marines from the FMF to perform the Corps' traditional functions: security of naval installations ashore and service afloat. By 30 November 1941, ships' detachments had grown to 68, manned by a total of 3,793 Marines.[10]

Ashore the Navy's stepped-up training programs, particularly in naval aviation, created more and more bases, security of which imposed a serious additional drain on Marine man power. In fiscal 1940 the Corps was called upon to provide guard detachments at four new naval air stations in the Continental United States and three in U. S. overseas territories.[11] The following fiscal year added another four air stations, a naval ammunition depot, a naval supply depot,[12] and 18 other new installations ranging in character and location from David Taylor Basin, Carderock, Maryland, to Naval Magazine, Indian Island, Washington. Furthermore, garrison detachments were detailed to twelve stations overseas, as will be discussed subsequently.

Simultaneously with filling the Navy's demands, the Marine Corps assumed additional security problems of its own as existing bases expanded and new ones were established. (See below.) Thus, the period under discussion saw the activation of seven new guard companies of a non-FMF character: at Quantico, San Diego, Dunedin (Florida), and Bremerton (Washington).

GROWTH OF MARINE TRAINING AND OPERATIONAL BASES

Inevitably the problems of housing, training, and equipping rapidly expanding manpower imposed increasing pressure on the Corps' existing facilities, pegged as these were to peacetime needs and the economy of depression years.

Following World War I, activities strictly Marine Corps in nature had been concentrated generally at the recruit training depots at Parris Island and San Diego,[13] and at the operational bases at Quantico and San Diego, where the East

[8] The genesis of the defense battalion was attributable to two factors: (a) the acceptance of the advanced base concept and its logical tactical requirements; and (b) during the pre-World War II period, while the nation was apathetic towards rearmament and/or military expansion, an increase in Marine strength, under the guise of a defense force, was politically more acceptable.

[9] CNO ltr to CMC, 9Dec41, Encl (a).

[10] Compilation from muster rolls closed 30Nov41 (located at Unit Diary Sect, HQMC).

[11] NAS Key West and Jacksonville, Fla.; Tongue Point, Oreg.; Alameda, Calif.; Sitka and Kodiak, Alaska; and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

[12] NAS Cape May, N. J.; Miami, Fla.; Corpus Christi, Tex.; and Quonset Point, R. I.; NAD Burns City, Ind.; NSD, Oakland, Calif.

[13] Generally, all recruits from east of the Mississippi were trained at Parris Island, all from west at San Diego.

Coast and West Coast components of the Fleet Marine Force were stationed. FMF aviation was based nearby at MCAS, Quantico, and NAS, San Diego.

Marines first laid eyes on Parris Island early in the Civil War when they participated in the naval expedition which seized adjoining Port Royal. This served as an important naval base throughout the war, but the Navy did not begin construction of installations on the island proper until 1883. The first record of a separate Marine detachment setting up there permanently occurs in June 1893. The post did not begin functioning, however, in its present capacity until November 1915 when the East Coast Marine recruit depots were transferred there from Norfolk and Philadelphia.

Retained as a permanent base after World War I, Parris Island continued its role as the point of initial contact with military life for all newly enlisted Marines from the East. Partly for this reason, its facilities were maintained at a fairly high level during the lean years of the 1920's and 1930's. Nevertheless, the flood of recruits soon overflowed existing facilities and forced a rapid expansion. Thus in 1940–41, even as the full training program continued and was intensified, new barracks, a new post exchange, and a new rifle range were added to those already operating at full capacity.

The Recruit Depot, San Diego, which had operated as such since August 1923, experienced similar problems and arrived at similar solutions. As events proved, both of these bases managed to keep abreast of the expansion program throughout the war and thus accomplish their basic missions.

Much of San Diego's success in its primary mission was owed to the activation of nearby Camp Elliott in mid-1940 to furnish advanced training and serve as a base for West Coast elements of the FMF. Until then San Diego had housed both of those activities, and with the speeding-up expansion program they were beginning to get in each other's way. The first FMF units began the transfer early in 1941 and greatly eased the pressure; though, as will be seen, Camp Elliott itself was eventually pressured out of existence.

Quantico, acquired by the Marine Corps immediately following U. S. entry into World War I, found its difficulties less readily resolved. During the interim between wars, this post assumed a position of paramount importance in the development of Marine amphibious doctrine and techniques, and in the training of Marine officers and technicians. The passage of years saw additional educational units move in until the Virginia base became the center of higher learning for the Marine Corps.

Advent of the national emergency soon made it apparent that no practicable physical expansion would enable Quantico to continue these activities, all rapidly growing and intensifying in scope, and at the same time serve as home base for east coast FMF units, especially when operational forces were to reach division size. Parris Island, hard pressed to keep abreast of its own problems, could do

little to relieve the presure. Clearly the situation called for construction of an entirely new and extensive base for FMF operations on the eastern seaboard. This required Congressional approval, which was obtained on 15 February 1941.

The site selected lay in the New River-Neuse River area of the North Carolina coast. The surveying and purchasing of land began immediately. By the end of April this preliminary work had been completed, and construction of Tent Camp #1, Marine Barracks, New River commenced. The isolated location of the area made development an enormous task. Transportation to the site was almost nonexistent, electric power lines were either lacking or greatly overloaded and able to provide but a fraction of the current needed. And the necessary labor could be obtained only by offering special inducements to workers. Both the Marine Corps and civilian contractors approached these problems to such good effect that by the summer of 1941 the far-from-completed camp had reached a stage of development that made it available for use.

The fledgling 1st Marine Division, still understrength,[14] moved in shortly after its return from maneuvers in the Caribbean. There it participated in a series of amphibious exercises, one with the Army's 1st Infantry Division, the first of four Army divisions to receive such training jointly with Marine units or under the direction of Marine officers.

Men of the Marine division pitched in to improve camp conditions while continuing their intensive training for combat. Civilian contractors pushed construction of permanent buildings so effectively that soon various specialized training and schooling facilities and other units began transferring to the new base from both Quantico and Parris Island. The 1st Marine Division, however, had long since departed beyond the seas by the time Marine Barracks, New River, reached the stage of development where the powers that be saw fit to dignify it, late in 1942, with the name Camp Lejeune.

Like the division, the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing began outgrowing its Quantico facilities long before it achieved full strength. Even while development progressed at New River, the Marine Corps obtained authorization for a new air base nearby. Cunningham Field, Cherry Point, North Carolina, was designated a Marine Corps Air Station for development purposes on 1 December 1941, and work began on what would become by commissioning day, 20 May 1942, a vast new base capable of handling the greater part of a completely built-up Marine aircraft wing.[15]

On the west coast, Camp Elliott, less hampered than Quantico by a multiplicity of activities, proved capable initially of handling the vastly increased load of advanced training, though the camp was expanded and developed to many times its original size in the process. Its 29,000 acres housed the 2d Marine Division from its activation until its departure for the Pacific. It also became the home of the Marine Corps' first tank training center and the infantry training center for numerous replacement drafts.

[14] While the table of organization listed three, the 1st MarDiv had only two infantry regiments at this time.

[15] *AdminHist*, 159.

OVERSEAS COMMITMENTS: ATLANTIC[16]

During the years between wars, the pervasive spirit of pacifism which led to repeated attempts by this country to cooperate in reduction of naval armaments and in international treaties militated against adequate defense preparations, as did budgetary restrictions. Such peace as these measures achieved proved uneasy at best, but the fact that the U. S. lived up to its agreements, whereas some other nations did not, contributed toward making our defense program a shadow of what it might have been. This was particularly serious in the Pacific, as will be seen. But in 1939–41, with war flaming through Europe, the more immediate danger lay in the Atlantic where Hitler's submarines appeared nearly invincible.

In the fall of 1939 the United States armed forces were barely adequate for the defense of the Western Hemisphere. As long as the national sentiment did not sanction total rearmament and military expansion, the administration was forced to rely on existent means and a partial mobilization of both manpower and material. Unfortunately, the lull in military operations in Europe during the winter of 1939–1940 seemed to justify public apathy and made the problem of rearmament more difficult for the President and his military planners.

Britain's historical dominance of the Atlantic sea lanes had given us a false sense of security there, and permitted the United States to commit a major part of the Navy to guard against Japanese aggression in the Pacific. However, the German offensive in the spring of 1940 served to jolt Americans from their complacency. German troops overran Denmark, Norway, the Low Countries, and France. President Roosevelt recognized the danger in this and caused a shift in our military policy to provide greater security in the Atlantic.

During the summer and fall of 1940, Congress stepped up the procurement of aircraft, mobilized the reserves, passed selective service legislation, and launched the two-ocean navy building program. But completion of these measures would take time, and we had no assurance that the Axis partners would sit idly by and enjoy the fruits of their initial aggression. To implement the rearmament program, President Roosevelt adopted the policy of aiding Britain and Russia (after June 1941) while continuing diplomatic relations with Germany and Japan. With industry expanding and the armed forces increasing in size and equipment, the Administration did everything short of war to bolster Britain's tottering position.

In the fall of 1940 Britain and the United States completed negotiations which culminated in one of the most extraordinary military deals in history. Britain, holding numerous Caribbean possessions, desperately needed additional convoy vessels to protect her vital Atlantic supply line against submarine depredations; the U. S., possessor of numerous overage destroyers, wished to strengthen defense of eastern approaches to the mainland and the Panama Canal. As a result of this situation, on 2 September 1940 the U. S. agreed to swap 50 of these destroy-

[16] Unless otherwise noted the material in this and the following sections is derived from *Hemisphere Defense; Undeclared War; Strategic Planning; Battle of the Atlantic.*

ers[17] in return for 99-year leases on certain base sites in various strategically placed British possessions: the Bahamas, Jamaica, Antigua, Saint Lucia, Trinidad, and British Guiana.

Since plans called for development of these sites into naval activities of varying nature, the first Americans to move in were Marines of the several security guard detachments. The same held true in the case of two additional bases not included in the destroyer deal: at Argentia (Newfoundland) and in Bermuda. Thus, while in the throes of expanding the FMF, the Marine Corps found itself saddled with still more garrison duty beyond the continental limits of the United States.

DEFENSE OF THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE: MARTINIQUE

The fall of France and the Netherlands alarmed the United States to the danger that New World possessions of these countries[18] might fall into Germany's hands should Hitler force the conquered nations to cede them, or to provide servicing there for German U-Boats operating in the Atlantic.

Martinique, the administrative and economic center of France's colonies in the Caribbean, became the focal point of American interest and concern. For should the three French warships there, including the aircraft carrier *Bearn* (loaded with 106 American-manufactured fighter planes destined for pre-Vichy France), be taken over by the enemy, the security of British and American shipping in the Atlantic would be seriously threatened. Furthermore, the French High Commissioner for the Antilles, Rear Admiral Georges Robert had declared his allegiance to the Vichy government and was emphatic in his refusal to accept American and British offers of "protection."

One solution, and one which was immediately discarded, called for an American break with Vichy and the occupation of the islands by American forces. It was not expected, however, that Admiral Robert would yield without a fight—and we were not ready to scrap our neutral policy and draw accusations of Yankee imperialism from friendly Western Hemisphere nations. Dire necessity, however, required some plan of operation. On 8 July 1940, the Joint Planning Committee completed a plan for an expeditionary force, to be readied for embarkation from New York on or about 15 July. The 1st Marine Brigade[19] was earmarked for the initial landing force, to be followed by a task force based on the Army's 1st Infantry Division.

While the expeditionary force was readied, officials of the Departments of State and Navy worked out a compromise to relieve the tense situation. The Ameri-

[17] These were 1,200-ton, flush-deck four-stackers, vintage of World War I, many of which had been laid up since that struggle and had to be recommissioned. By the time the trade was completed (10Apr41), the U. S. had become more deeply involved and threw in an additional 10 escort vessels of the "Lake" class Coast Guard cutter.

[18] Dutch Guiana, Aruba, and Curacao; French Guiana on the South American continent; Saint Pierre and Miquelon off Newfoundland; Martinique, Guadeloupe, and several smaller islands in the West Indies.

[19] The 1st MarBrig then based at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, was composed of 5th Mar, 1st Bn, 10th Mar (artillery), 1st EngBn, 1st MedBn, three provisional (casual) companies, BrigHqCo, and one company each of service troops, chemical troops, tanks, and motor transport.

can representative in negotiations that followed, Rear Admiral John W. Greenslade, arrived at an agreement with Admiral Robert to maintain the *status quo;* and the "hot" Martinique problem was temporarily resolved without the United States being forced into military action.

However, heightened tensions during the late summer of 1940 again indicated the possibility of French connivance with Germany. Accordingly, late in October 1940 the President " . . . asked the Navy to draft a plan for an emergency operation. . . ." [20] This plan called for an assault on Martinique, by a naval force including a landing party of some 2,800 Marines of the 1st Marine Brigade, to be supported by two reinforced Army regiments. Later plans increased the size of the force; revised estimates were based on the possibility of more than token resistance from the seven to eight thousand French soldiers and sailors on the island.

Fortunately, the operation against Martinique died stillborn. Admiral Greenslade reached a new "gentlemen's agreement" with Admiral Robert, although there were frequent instances later when President Roosevelt still thought it might be necessary to occupy the island. The Marine Corps remained prepared for possible action until Admiral Robert surrendered his command to American Vice Admiral John S. Hoover in June 1943.

THE AZORES

As early as spring 1940, President Roosevelt was deeply concerned over the possibility of a German invasion of the Portuguese Azores. These islands lie athwart the vital shipping lanes between the United States and the Mediterranean, and Europe and South America. While the Army considered them of little value in Western Hemisphere defense considerations, their danger was measurable by their value to Germany. From air bases and naval facilities in the islands, German aircraft and submarines could sortie after the bulk of British shipping.

Our deep concern for the safety and integrity of the islands led to a series of discussions with both the British, Portugal's ally, and the Lisbon government. By October 1940, United States Army and Navy planning officers had drafted a plan for a surprise seizure of the Azores. However, the plan to land one reinforced division was built on sand: the Army did not have the necessary troops to commit, nor did the Navy have adequate ships to transport and support the landing force. And, politically, it was contrary to American policy at this time to become a *de facto* participant in the European war.

By May 1941 intelligence estimates from Europe again indicated the possibility of a German movement into the Iberian peninsula and German occupation of the Azores and adjacent islands. On the 22d of that month, President Roosevelt directed the Army and Navy to draft a new plan for an expedition to occupy the Azores. This plan (GRAY), approved by the Joint Board on 29 May, provided for a landing force of 28,000 combat troops, half Marine and half Army; the Navy was responsible for transporting and supporting the force. Major General H. M. Smith, USMC, would command the landing force, under Rear Admiral Ernest J. King, the expeditionary commander.

However, while these preparations were being made, other factors developed and

[20] Quoted in *Hemisphere Defense,* Chap IV, 6.

altered the original mission of the mixed force. Portugal was opposed to an American occupation of the Azores, and United States planners became preoccupied with the threat of German efforts to occupy South America, particularly Brazil. The succeeding weeks witnessed a change in both the urgency for the Azores operation and in the mission of the Marine complement of the Azores force.

During the early part of June, intelligence sources in Europe produced creditable evidence that Germany did not plan to invade Spain and Portugal but intended rather to attack in the opposite direction. Russia would be Hitler's next objective. The forecast of the German plans put an end to American fears for the safety of the Azores, and permitted the United States to divert the Marines to Iceland.

DISTRIBUTION SUMMARY

How thin the Marine Corps had to spread its manpower in order to fulfill its many commitments is indicated by the table that follows showing the distribution effective 30 November 1941, on the eve of Pearl Harbor. The fact that the figures quoted do not add up to total Corps strength is accounted for by omission of minor categories involving individuals or small groups of men.

Continental U. S. (non-FMF)

Major Marine Corps Bases [21]	14,707
Posts & Stations (43)	10,089
Headquarters & Staff	780
Recruiting (4 districts)	847
Total	26,423

Overseas (non-FMF)

Posts & Stations (24)	3,367
Tactical Units [22]	5,498
Shipboard Detachments (68)	3,793
Total	12,658

Fleet Marine Force, Continental U. S.

1st MarDiv	8,918
2d MarDiv (less dets)	7,540
2d DefBn	865
1st MAW	1,301
2d MAW (less dets)	682
Miscellaneous	633
Total	19,939

Fleet Marine Force, Overseas

5 DefBns (Pacific)	4,399
2d MAW (elements) (Pacific)	733
2d MarDiv (elements) (Pacific)	489
Total	5,621
Total above categories	64,641
Total strength Marine Corps	65,881

[21] Quantico, Parris Island, San Diego, Camp Elliott, New River.

[22] 4th Mar (Philippines), 801; 1st SepBn (Philippines), 725; 1st MarBrig(Prov) (Iceland), 3,972.

PART TWO

War Comes

Prewar Situation in the Pacific

SUMMARY OF NEGOTIATIONS [1]

In the late years of the 19th Century and the early decades of the 20th, Japan set out to gain more territory. Consistently following a policy of encroachment in Asia and the Pacific, and retreating only when confronted with the threat of superior force, the Japanese Empire steadily grew in size and strength. Warning signals of an impending clash between Japan and the Western nations with extensive interests in the Orient became increasingly evident. In the 1930's when these nations were gripped by economic depression and their military expenditures were cut to the bone, Japan struck brazenly.

In 1931 Japanese troops invaded Manchuria and no concerted international military effort was made to halt the seizure. An ineffectual censure by the League of Nations, far from discouraging Japan, emboldened her to further action. Angrily, the Japanese delegates stalked out at Geneva and gave formal notice of intention to withdraw from the League. The country thickened its curtain of secrecy which shrouded the League-mandated islands awarded Japan as its share of the spoil of German possessions lost in World War I. In 1934 the Japanese served notice that they would no longer abide by the limitations of the Washington Naval Disarmament Treaty of 1922. Finally, in 1937, Japan attacked China and horrified the world with the excesses committed by her soldiers in the infamous Rape of Nanking. But still there was no effective military action to curb this rampant aggression.

In this period Japan was not without supporters. Germany and Italy, bent on similar programs of territorial aggrandizement in Europe and Africa, made common cause with the Japanese. These "Axis" powers signed a mutual assistance pact in 1937, ostensibly aimed at the Communist Cominform, but in essence as a show of strength to forestall interference with their plans of conquest. In August 1940, after the outbreak of war in Europe and the fall of France, Germany forced the Vichy Government to consent to Japanese occupation of northern Indo-China. The three predatory nations combined again in less than a month, this time in the Tripartite Treaty of 27 September which promised concerted action by the Axis in case of war with the United States.

The United States, traditionally a friend of China and a supporter of an "Open Door" policy in Asia, strongly opposed Japanese moves to establish hegemony over the strife-torn Chinese Republic.

[1] Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from Senate Doc No. 244, 79th Congress, 2d Session, *Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack* (Washington: GPO, 1946), hereinafter cited as *Pearl Harbor Rept* and the Committee's record of 39 volumes of hearings and exhibits, hereinafter cited as *Hearings Record;* G. N. Steiger, *A History of the Far East* (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1944).

While the political sentiment of the majority of Americans in the late 1930's would condone no direct military intervention, the government and the nation were openly sympathetic to the Chinese cause. Both moral and legal embargoes against munitions shipments to Japan were put into effect and increasing amounts of material aid given to China. American pilots, including members of the armed forces, were permitted to volunteer to fly for the Chinese Air Force against the Japanese.[2]

By early 1941 Japan was hurt in pride, purse, and potency as a result of American political and economic measures taken to halt its expansion. In March a new Ambassador, Admiral Nomura, was sent to Washington to negotiate a settlement of Japanese-American differences. He was confronted with a statement of four principles which represented the basic American position in negotiations. These were:

(1) Respect for the territorial integrity and the sovereignty of each and all nations;

(2) Support of the principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of other countries;

(3) Support of the principle of equality, including equality of commercial opportunity;

(4) Nondisturbance of the *status quo* in the Pacific except as the *status quo* may be altered by peaceful means.[3]

In retrospect, it seems obvious that there was little likelihood of Japan accepting any of these principles as a basis for negotiations. At the time, however, considerable and protracted effort was made to resolve differences. Postwar evidence indicates that the Japanese Premier, Prince Konoye, as well as Ambassador Nomura were sincere in their efforts to achieve a peaceful solution of the threatening situation in the Pacific. It was not Konoye, however, who called the turn in Imperial policy, but the Japanese Army. And the Army adamantly refused to consider any concession that might cause it to lose face.

After Germany attacked Russia in June 1941, the longtime threat of Soviet intervention in Japan's plans for expansion was virtually eliminated. The Japanese Army moved swiftly to grab more territory and to add to its strength. Southern Indo-China was occupied and conscripts and reservists were called up. In the face of this fresh evidence of Japanese intransigence, President Roosevelt froze all Japanese assets in the United States, effectively severing the last commercial contact between the two nations.

In October the Army forced the Konoye Cabinet to resign and replaced it with a government entirely sympathetic to its position.[4] The new premier, General Tojo, sent a special representative, Saburu Kurusu, to Washington to assist Nomura and revitalize negotiations. The Japanese diplomats were in an untenable position. They were instructed, in effect, to get the United States to accept Japanese territorial seizures on Japanese terms. Their mission was hopeless, but behind its facade of seeming interest in true negotiations, Tojo's government speeded up its preparations for war. As far as the Japanese leaders were concerned, war with the United States was a now or never proposition, since American-inspired economic sanctions would soon rob them of the necessary raw materials, particularly

[2] *United States Relations with China* (Washington: Dept of State, 1949), 24.

[3] *Hearings Record*, Part 2, 1103–1104.

[4] M. Kato, *The Lost War* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1946), 48.

oil, which they had to have to supply their military machine.

The only event that might have halted Japanese war preparations would have been a complete abnegation by the United States of its principles of negotiation. On 22 November Ambassador Kurusu received the third and last of a series of communiques from Japan setting deadlines for successful negotiations. He was informed that after 29 November things were "automatically going to happen." [5]

As far as the Japanese were concerned negotiations were at an end and the time for direct action had come. The two Japanese envoys were carefully instructed, however, not to give the impression that talks had been broken off. The stage had been set for "the day that will live in infamy."

After an extremely thorough investigation of the negotiations during this period prior to the outbreak of the war, a Joint Congressional Committee summed up the duplicity of Japanese negotiations in this succinct statement:

> In considering the negotiations in their entirety the conclusion is inescapable that Japan had no concessions to make and that her program of aggression was immutable.[6]

JAPANESE WAR PLAN [7]

Both the United States and Japan had developed plans for war in the Pacific long before December 1941. Each nation considered the other to be its most probable enemy. There was, however, a fundamental moral difference between the respective war plans. The Americans planned for defense and retaliation in case of attack; the Japanese intended to strike the first blow. (See Map 1, Map Section)

Japan's prime objective was economic self-sufficiency, and the prize she sought was control of the rich natural resources of Southeast Asia and the islands of the East Indies, her "Southern Resources Area." The Japanese were well aware that invasion in this area would bring them into conflict with a coalition of powers. The lands they aspired to conquer were the possessions or protectorates of Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, and the United States. By means of surprise attacks, launched simultaneously on a half dozen different fronts, the Japanese expected to catch the Allies off-balance and ill-prepared.

The obvious threat of war with Japan had not been ignored by any of these Allied nations, but the tremendous advantage of choice of time and place of attack rested with the aggressor. Japan intended to strike during a period when most of the resources in men and material of the British Commonwealth were being devoted to the defeat of the European Axis partners. The Netherlands, which existed only as a government-in-exile, could contribute quite a few ships but only a small number of men to a common defense force. And the United States, most certainly Japan's strongest enemy, was heavily committed to support the Allies in Europe and the Near East. Moreover, that nation was only partially mobilized for war.

The initial Japanese war concept did not envisage the occupation of any terri-

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[5] *Hearings Record*, Part 12, Exhibit No. 1, 165.

[6] *Pearl Harbor Rept*, 49.

[7] Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *Pearl Harbor Rept; Hearings Record*, Part 13, Exhibits 8–8D, Japanese Records; USSBS (Pac), NavAnalysisDiv, *Campaigns of the Pacific War* (Washington: GPO, 1946), hereinafter cited as *Campaigns of the Pacific War*.

tory east of Tarawa in the Gilberts. All operations beyond the limits of the Southern Resources Area were designed to establish and protect a defensive perimeter. The cordon of strategic bases and island outposts was to stretch from the Kuriles through Wake Atoll to the Marshalls and Gilberts and thence west to the Bismarck Archipelago. The islands of Timor, Java, and Sumatra in the East Indies were to be seized and Japanese troops were to occupy the Malayan Peninsula and Burma.

The major force which might prevent or delay the accomplishment of the Japanese plan was the United States Pacific Fleet based at Pearl Harbor. Recognizing the threat posed by the American naval strength, the Commander in Chief of the Japanese Combined Fleet, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, directed that a study be made of the feasibility of a surprise aerial attack on Pearl, timed to coincide with the outbreak of war. In February 1941 the first staff considerations of the projected raid were begun, but the actual details of the operation were not worked out until September when it seemed increasingly obvious to the Japanese high command that war was inevitable and that they needed this bold stroke to insure the success of initial attacks.

On 3 November the Chief of the Naval General Staff, Admiral Osami Nagano, approved the draft plan, and on the 5th commanders of fleets and task forces were given their assignments. Orders were issued to selected task force units to begin moving singly and in small groups to Hitokappu Bay in the Kuriles on or about 15 November. Ten days later a striking force, its core six large fleet carriers transporting the pick of the Japanese Navy's planes and pilots, sortied from the secluded anchorage bound for the Hawaiian Islands. The approach route lay well north of the search areas patrolled by American planes based at Midway and Wake and out of normal shipping lanes.

The tentative day of attack, X-day, had been set for a Sunday, 7 December (Pearl Harbor time). Japanese intelligence indicated that most of the Pacific Fleet would be in port on a weekend. Tallies of the ships present at the Pearl Harbor Naval Base received from the Japanese consulate at Honolulu were transmitted to the attack force as late as 5 December. Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, the striking force commander, received orders from Yamamoto on 2 December confirming the chosen date. There was still time to turn back; if the approaching ships had been discovered prior to 6 December they had orders to return. No one saw them, however, and the carriers arrived at their launching point right on schedule.

At midnight of 6–7 December, the Japanese Combined Fleet Operation Order No. 1 informed its readers that a state of war existed with the United States, Great Britain, and the Netherlands.

AMERICAN WAR PLAN[8]

A nation's war plans are never static. The constantly changing world political scene demands continual reevaluation and amendment. In the 1930's, American war

[8] Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *Pearl Harbor Rept;* Navy Basic War Plan—Rainbow No. 5 (WPL–46), 26May41 and Appendix I, Joint Army-Navy Basic War Plan Rainbow No. 5, quoted in full in *Hearings Record*, Part 33, Exhibit No. 4; MarCorps Plan C–2, Rainbow No. 5, 5Jun41, Plans & Policies Div Files; M. S. Watson, *Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations—United States Army in World War II* (Washington: HistDiv, DA, 1950); S. E. Morison,

plans were concerned primarily with courses of action to be taken in the event of a conflict in one theatre and against one nation or a contiguous group of nations. In these so-called "color plans," each probable enemy was assigned a separate color designation; Japan became Orange. With the advent of the Axis coalition, American military men began thinking in terms of a true world war. As these new plans evolved they were given the name Rainbow to signify their concept of a multi-national war.

The United States was deeply involved in the war in Europe soon after its outbreak, if not as an active belligerent, then as the arsenal of the democracies. By the spring of 1941 American naval vessels were convoying shipments of war materiel at least part of the way to Europe and they were actively guarding against German submarines a Neutrality Zone that extended far out into the Atlantic. The intent of these measures and others similar to them was clearly to support Britain in its war against Germany, Italy, and their satellites. There was little question where the sympathies of the majority of Americans lay in this struggle and none at all regarding the position of their government.

On 29 January 1941, ranking British and American staff officers met in Washington to discuss joint measures to be taken if the United States should be forced to a war with the Axis Powers. It was regarded as almost certain that the outbreak of hostilities with any one of the Axis partners would bring immediate declarations of war from the others. By insuring action on two widely separated fronts, the Axis could expect at the very least a decreased Allied capability to concentrate their forces. The American-British conversations ended on 27 March with an agreement (ABC–1) which was to have a profound effect on the course of World War II. Its basic strategical decision, which never was discarded, stated that:

> Since Germany is the predominant member of the Axis Powers, the Atlantic and European area is considered to be the decisive theatre. The principal United States military effort will be exerted in that theatre, and operations of United States forces in other theatres will be conducted in such a manner as to facilitate that effort . . . . If Japan does enter the war, the Military Strategy in the Far East will be defensive.[9]

The defensive implied in the war against Japan was not to be a holding action, however, but rather a strategic defensive that contemplated a series of tactical offensives with the Pacific Fleet as the striking force. A new American war plan, Rainbow 5, was promulgated soon after the end of the American-British talks. Almost the whole of the Pacific was made an American strategic responsibility and the Army's primary mission under the plan was cooperation with and support of the fleet.

A listing of the contemplated offensive actions of Rainbow 5, which included the capture of the Caroline and Marshall Islands, would be interesting but academic. The success of the Japanese raid on Pearl Harbor forced a drastic revision of strategy which effectively postponed amphib-

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The Rising Sun in the Pacific 1931–April1942—History of United States Naval Operations in World War II (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1948), hereinafter cited as *Rising Sun in the Pacific.*

[9] Para 13 of ABC–1 quoted in *Hearings Record*, Part 33, 958.

ious assaults in the Central Pacific. Certain defensive measures which were mentioned in the plan, however, were implemented prior to the outbreak of war and in most of them Marine forces figured prominently.

Some of the Marine defense battalions, tailored to meet the needs of garrisons for isolated island outposts, were already in the Pacific by the time Rainbow 5 was published. The plan called for the development of bases, primarily air bases, at Midway, Johnston, Palmyra, Samoa, and Wake. All of these islands, which were under control of the Navy, were to have Marine garrisons. Guam, in the center of the Japanese-held Marianas, which had long had a small Marine barracks detachment, was decisively written off in the war plan; its early capture by the Japanese was conceded. The rest of the islands were placed in a category which called for defense forces sufficient to repel major attacks.

The purpose of establishing bases on these islands was twofold. Samoa was to help protect the routes of communication to the Southwest Pacific; Johnston, Palmyra, Wake, and Midway were to serve as outguards for the Pacific Fleet's home port at Pearl. (See Map 1, Map Section)

MARINE GARRISONS[10]

The Navy did not start cold with its advance base development scheme for the four island outposts of the Hawaiian Group. A blueprint for base expansion in the Pacific had been laid out in the report of the Navy's Hepburn Board, a Congressionally authorized fact-finding group which, in the spring of 1938, made a strategic study of the need for additional United States naval bases. The potential utility of Midway, Wake, Johnston, and Palmyra was recognized,[11] and surveys were conducted and plans made for the construction of base facilities, airfields, and seadromes during 1939 and 1940. The responsibility for developing garrison plans and locating coastal and antiaircraft gun positions was given to Colonel Harry K. Pickett, 14th Naval District Marine Officer and Commanding Officer, Marine Barracks, Pearl Harbor Navy Yard. The fact that Colonel Pickett personally surveyed most of the base sites insured active and knowledgeable cooperation at Pearl Harbor with requests from the islands for men and materiel to implement the garrison plans.

Although they were popularly referred to in the singular sense, a custom that will be continued in this narrative, each of the outposts was actually a coral atoll encompassing varying numbers of bleak, low-

[10] Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from CNO Serial 070412, 23Jun41, "Policy regarding employment of Marine Defense Battalions in the Pacific Area" (located at NRMC); CNO Serial 091812, 25Sep41, "Employment of Marine Defense Battalions"; CO, 1st DefBn ltr to OIC, HistDiv, HQMC, 29Dec43; CO, 3d DefBn ltr to OIC, HistDiv, HQMC, 4Feb44; MD, 1st DefBn, PalmyraIs, Annual Rept of Activities, 1Jul43; Hist of the 7th DefBn, 21Dec42; 1st SamoanBn, MCR, Annual Rept of Activities, 1Jul42; LtCol R. D. Heinl, *The Defense of Wake* (Washington: HistSec, PubInfoDiv, HQMC, 1947), hereinafter cited as *Defense of Wake;* LtCol R. D. Heinl, *Marines at Midway* (Washington: HistSec, PubInfoDiv, HQMC, 1948), hereinafter cited as *Marines at Midway.*

[11] House Doc No. 65, 76th Congress, 1st Session, "Report on the Need of Additional Naval Bases to Defend the Coast of the United States, its Territories and Possessions" (Hepburn Board Rept), 3Jan39, *passim.*

lying sand islands within a fringing reef. Each atoll had at least one island big enough to contain an airstrip; Midway had two. The lagoons within the reefs were all large enough to permit the dredging and blasting of seaplane landing lanes and anchorages for small cargo ships; Midway's and Wake's were also slated for development as forward bases for the Pacific Fleet's submarines. Civilian contractors were hired to build the naval base installations, but until war actually broke out most of the work on the island defenses was done by the men who were to man them, Marines of the 1st, 3d, and 6th Defense Battalions.

The organization of the defense battalions varied according to time and place of employment, but by late 1941 the standard T/O called for a unit with more than 900 men assigned to a headquarters battery, three 5-inch coast defense gun batteries, three 3-inch antiaircraft batteries, a sound locator and searchlight battery, a battery of .50 caliber antiaircraft machine guns, and a battery of .30 caliber machine guns for beach defense. Midway was the only outpost that actually drew an entire battalion, although Wake originally was slated to be garrisoned by one. On Johnston and Palmyra the habitable area was so limited that it was impossible to accommodate more than a small defense detachment.

Some development work had been done on Wake and Midway, the two northern islands, before the arrival of the naval contractors' construction crews. In 1935 Pan American World Airways had set up way stations for its Clipper service to the Orient on both Midway and Wake and a relay station of the trans-Pacific cable had been in operation on Midway's Sand Island since 1903. Most construction, like the passenger hotel on Wake and the quarters for the airline's and cable company's personnel, was of little military value.

Midway, which had the most ambitious base plan, was also the first outpost scheduled to receive a Marine garrison—the 3d Defense Battalion which arrived at Pearl Harbor on 7 May 1940. The bulk of the battalion remained in Hawaii for the next eight months while reconnaissance details, followed by small advance parties, did the preliminary work on supply and defense installations.[12] On 27 January 1941, in the face of the threat posed by Japan's aggressive actions, the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) directed that the rest of the 3d Defense Battalion be moved to Midway, that detachments of the 1st Defense Battalion be established at Johnston and Palmyra, and that the 6th Defense Battalion, then in training at San Diego, move to Pearl Harbor as a replacement and reserve unit for the outposts.[13]

On 15 February, the same day that the 3d Battalion began unloading its heavy equipment at Midway, an advance detachment of the 1st Defense Battalion left San Diego on the *Enterprise*. At Pearl Harbor the detachment left the carrier and transferred to a small cargo ship that steamed on to the southwest for 800 miles

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[12] BriGen A. R. Pefley notes on draft manuscript, 14Jan57. Since all fresh water had to be distilled, the capacity of the distillers set the limit for the size of the island garrison. In terms of water consumption each contractor's workman took the place of a Marine. Adm C. C. Bloch ltr to ACofS, G–3, HQMC, 7Jan57.

[13] CNO Serial 0618, 17Jan41, "Establishment of Permanent Marine Defense Forces at Johnston, Midway, and Palmyra Islands."

to reach tiny Johnston where on 3 March two 5-inch guns, six Marines, and two naval corpsmen were set ashore. After a few days layover to help the caretaker detail get set up, the rest of the advance party (3 officers and 45 enlisted men) went on to Palmyra, approximately 1,100 miles south of Oahu.

After the remainder of the 1st Defense Battalion arrived at Pearl, small reinforcing detachments were gradually added to the southern outpost garrisons as the islands' supply and quartering facilities were expanded. On Johnston and Palmyra, as at Midway, the civilian contractors' crews and construction equipment were heavily committed to the naval air base program, and only occasionally could the Marines borrow a bulldozer, truck, or grader to help out in their own extensive schedule of defense construction. For the most part, the garrisons relied on pick and shovel to get their guns emplaced and to dig in the ammunition magazines, command posts, and fire direction centers necessary for island defense.

Duty on the small atolls was arduous and dull with little relief from the monotony of a steady round of work and training. When a few hours off was granted, there was no place to go and little to do; the visible world shrank to a few uninviting acres of dunes, scrub brush, and coral surrounded by seemingly endless stretches of ocean. The visits of patrol planes, supply ships, and even inspection parties were welcomed. Under the circumstances, morale at the isolated posts remained surprisingly high, helped perhaps by the prospect of action.

In so far as possible, the 14th Naval District attempted to follow a policy of rotation for the men at the outlying posts, replacing those that had been longest "in the field" with men from Pearl Harbor. In midsummer a group of 1st Defense Battalion personnel was sent to Midway to start the relief of the 3d Battalion and on 11 September the 6th Defense Battalion arrived to take over as the atoll's garrison. The 3d Battalion returned to Hawaii for a well-deserved break from the gruelling monotony and work of building defenses.

By August 1941 the work on the naval air base at Wake was well along and the need for a garrison there was imperative. An advance detachment of the 1st Defense Battalion arrived at the atoll on 19 August and immediately began the now familiar process of backbreaking work to dig in guns, dumps, aid stations, and command posts. Again the contractor's men and machines were largely devoted to work on the airfield and the lagoon, and the Marines had to get along with the hand tools organic to the unit. In late October reinforcements from the parent battalion made the 2,000-mile trip from Hawaii to bring the garrison up to a strength of nearly 400 men. The unit scheduled to be the permanent garrison on Wake, the 4th Defense Battalion, arrived at Pearl Harbor on 1 December, too late to reinforce or replace the Wake Detachment. A most important addition to the atoll's defenses did arrive, however, before war broke. Twelve Grumman Wildcats of Marine Fighter Squadron 211 flew in to the airstrip off the *Enterprise* on 4 December.

Just before the Japanese attacked, the strength of defense battalion personnel on outpost duty and at Pearl Harbor was:

	Pearl Harbor		Johnston		Palmyra		Midway		Wake	
	Off	Enl	Off	Enl	Off	Enl	Off	Enl	Off	Enl
1st DefBn	20	241	7	155	7	151			16	406
3d DefBn	40	823						1		
4th DefBn	38	780								
6th DefBn	4	17					33	810		

For armament the outposts relied mainly on the organic weapons of the defense battalions: 5-inch naval guns, 3-inch antiaircraft guns, and .30 and .50 caliber machine guns. Midway had, in addition, three 7-inch naval guns still to be mounted and a fourth gun at Pearl Harbor waiting to be shipped. The breakdown of weapon strength showed: [14]

	Midway	Johnston	Palmyra	Wake
5-inch guns	6	2	4	6
3-inch guns	12	4	4	12
.50 cal MGs	30	8	8	18
.30 cal MGs	30	8	8	30

Although the list of weapons was imposing, the garrisons were not strong enough to man them adequately; the standard defense battalion of 1941, moreover, included no infantry.

In contrast to the garrisons of the Pearl Harbor outposts, the 7th Defense Battalion slated for duty at Tutuila, main island of American Samoa, was a composite infantry-artillery unit. The battalion was organized at San Diego on 16 December 1940 with an initial strength of 25 officers and 392 enlisted men. Its T/O called for a headquarters company, an infantry company, and an artillery battery as well as a small detail which had the mission of organizing and training a battalion of Samoan reservists.

The islands of American Samoa had a native population of almost 10,000 which could be drawn upon as a labor force and for troops to back up a regular garrison. This was not the only significant difference between the outpost atolls and Samoa, however. The terrain of Tutuila, which was by far the largest and most heavily populated of the islands, was mountainous and heavily forested, and its 52 square miles contained a number of areas that could be converted into camps and supply depots. There was room for training areas and small arms ranges. The fine harbor at Pago Pago, site of the U. S. Naval Station and headquarters of the naval governor, could be used by large vessels. This combination of harbor, elbow room, and an indigenous labor force, plus its location along the shipping route to the Southwest Pacific, made Tutuila a vital strategic base. (See Map 3)

During the spring and early summer of 1940, Major Alfred R. Pefley of Colonel Pickett's staff made a thorough survey of Tutuila and prepared a detailed plan for its defense. On 29 November the CNO directed that defense plans based on Pefley's recommendations be implemented

[14] ComFourteen Rept of Status of DefBns assigned to the 14th ND, 1Dec41 (located at NRMC). Personnel figures include naval medical personnel assigned to the defense battalions.

immediately. The naval governor was authorized to begin construction of coast defense and antiaircraft gun positions. Most of the guns to be mounted were already in storage at the naval station and the Bureau of Ordnance was directed to provide the ammunition and additional weapons still needed.[15]

The primary purpose of raising the 7th Defense Battalion was the manning of the four 6-inch naval guns and six 3-inch antiaircraft guns provided for in initial defense plans. The wisdom of including infantry in the battalion and making provision for reinforcement by trained Samoan reserves can hardly be questioned. Tutuila was far too large an island to be adequately protected by a relatively few big guns, most of which were concentrated around Pago Pago harbor. Small beach defense garrisons were needed all around the island shorelines to check enemy raiding parties. It was intended that most of the Samoan reserves would be equipped and trained with rifles taken from naval stores and used in the beach defenses where their knowledge of the terrain would be invaluable.

An advance party of the 7th Defense Battalion, which left the States before the unit was formally activated, arrived at Pago Pago on 21 December 1940. The rest of the battalion made the 4,500-mile voyage from San Diego via Pearl Harbor in March, arriving on the 15th. The next months were busy ones as guns were emplaced and test fired, beach defenses were constructed, miles of communication lines were laid, and trails were cut which would enable quick reinforcement of threatened landing points.

It was midsummer before the first Samoan Marine was actually enlisted, but many natives voluntarily took weapons training on an unpaid status, continuing a practice begun by the naval governor in November 1940.[16] The first native recruit was enlisted on 16 August 1941 and the 1st Samoan Battalion, Marine Corps Reserve, was a going concern by the time war broke. The authorized strength of the battalion was 500 enlisted men, but this figure could never be reached because of the great number of men needed as laborers on essential base construction.

There was one factor of the defense picture at Tutuila that matched the situation at Midway, Johnston, and Palmyra. None of these islands had, at the onset of war, any land planes. The Marine air squadrons which were scheduled to join the defenders were either still in the States or else based on Oahu, waiting for the signal that the airfields were ready for use. That part of Marine Air which was in the Hawaiian Islands was based at Ewa Field, located approximately four air miles west of Pearl Harbor. Just prior to the Japanese attack, the units stationed at the field were Headquarters and Service Squadron of Marine Aircraft Group 21 (MAG–21); Marine Scout Bomber Squadron 232 (VMSB–232); Marine Utility Squadron 252 (VMJ–252); and the rear echelon of VMF–211, which had moved forward to Wake. Operational control of the Marine planes in the Hawaiian area was exercised by the Commander Aircraft, Battle Force, Pacific Fleet.[17]

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[15] CNO serial 054430, 29Nov40, "Defense of American Samoa."

[16] Gov of AmerSamoa ltr to CNO, 13Feb41, "Establishment of Native Insular Force."

[17] 2dLt B. Hollingshead, "The Japanese Attack on 7 December 1941 on the Marine Corps Air

Aside from the Marine forces in the Western Pacific assigned to the Asiatic Fleet,[18] the only sizeable Marine units in the Pacific not already accounted for were guard detachments on Oahu and the 2d Engineer Battalion (less Companies C and D) which had been sent to Oahu to establish an advance amphibious training base for the 2d Marine Division. There was a 485-man Marine Barracks at the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard and 102 men assigned to the barracks at the Naval Air Station at Ford Island. Marines provided the guard (169 men) at the Naval Ammunition Depot at Lualualei in the hills northwest of Honolulu. The defense battalions which were quartered in or near the navy yard were under the operational control of the Commanding Officer, Marine Barracks, Colonel Pickett.

There were an additional 877 Marines present in Pearl Harbor on 7 December as members of the guard detachments of the battleships and cruisers of the Pacific Fleet.[19] In all, there were more than 4,500 Marines on Oahu that first day.

Station at Ewa, Oahu, Territory of Hawaii" (MS, HistDiv, HQMC, January 1945), 3–8, hereinafter cited as *Ewa Monograph*. The other squadrons assigned to MAG–21 were either at sea with the Navy's carriers or still in the U. S.

[18] See Part IV, "Marines in the Philippines," for the prewar situation in China and the Philippines.

[19] The strength of most Marine units on Oahu is listed in *Hearings Record*, Part 24, Exhibit No. 40. "Location of regularly assigned commanding officers of ships present during the Japanese attack of 7 December 1941."

Japan Strikes

PEARL HARBOR [1]

Perhaps no action in American military history has been so thoroughly documented, examined, and dissected as the Pearl Harbor attack. Investigation has followed investigation; a host of books have been written on the subject, all in an effort to pin down the responsibility in the welter of charge and countercharge. The issue of what individuals or set of circumstances, if any, should bear the blame for the success of the Japanese raid has not been, and may never be, finally decided. On one point, however, there has been unanimous agreement—that the courage of the vast majority of defending troops was of a high order.

The first inkling of the Japanese attack came not from the air, but from the sea. At 0637 on 7 December, more than an hour before any enemy planes were sighted, an American patrol bomber and the destroyer *Ward* attacked and sank an unidentified submarine in the restricted waters close to the entrance to Pearl Harbor.[2] This vessel was one of five Japanese two-man submarines which had the extremely risky mission of penetrating the Pacific Fleet's stronghold. The midgets were transported to the target on board large long-range submarines, part of an undersea scouting and screening force which had fanned out ahead of the enemy carriers. Not one of the midget raiders achieved any success; four were sunk and one ran aground.

The Japanese attack schedule allowed the Americans little time to evaluate the significance of the submarine sighting. The first enemy strike group was airborne and winging its way toward Oahu before the *Ward* fired its initial spread of depth charges. The Japanese carrier force had turned in the night and steamed full ahead for its target, launching the first plane at 0600 when the ships were approximately 200 miles north of Pearl Harbor. A second strike group took off at 0745 when the carriers had reached a position 30 miles closer to the American base. Although a radar set on the island picked up the approaching planes in time to give warning, the report of the sighting was believed an error and disregarded, and the Japanese fighters and bombers appeared unannounced over their objectives.

The enemy plan of attack was simple. Dive bombers and fighter planes would

[1] Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *Pearl Harbor Rcpt; Hearings Record*, Part 13, Exhibits Nos. 8–8D, Japanese Records, and Parts 23 and 24, Hearings and Exhibits of the Roberts Commission; MarFor, 14th ND Jnl, December 1941; *Ewa Monograph;* Col H. K. Pickett ltr to BriGen C. D. Barrett, 22Dec41 (located at NRMC, Job 6608, Box 25); *Rising Sun in the Pacific.*

[2] "Unfortunately, the radio report sent to the 14th N. D. was not clear, and in view of many previous false reports, it was considered necessary to check the report. The air attack started before verification was received." Adm C. C. Block ltr, *op. cit.*

strafe and bomb the major Army and Navy airfields in an attempt to catch defending aircraft on the ground. Simultaneously, the battleships moored to pilings along the shore of Ford Island would be hit by high- and low-level bombing attacks. The shipping strike groups included large numbers of dive and horizontal bombers, since the Japanese anticipated that protective netting might prevent their lethal torpedo bombers from being fully effective. In all, 321 planes took part in the raid, while 39 fighters flew protective cover over the carriers to guard against a retaliatory attack that never materialized.

At 0755 the soft stillness of Sunday morning was broken by the screaming whine of dive bombers and the sharp chatter of machine guns. At half a dozen different bases around the island of Oahu Japanese planes signaled the outbreak of war with a torrent of sudden death. Patrol bombers were caught in the water at Kaneohe Naval Air Station, across the island from Honolulu; closely parked rows of planes, concentrated to protect them from sabotage, were transformed into smoking heaps of useless wreckage at the Army's Wheeler and Hickam Fields, the Marines' air base at Ewa, and the Navy's Ford Island air station. The attack on the airfields had barely started before the first bombs and torpedoes were loosed against the sitting targets of "battleship row." Within minutes most of the battleships at the Ford Island moorings had been hit by one or more torpedoes and bombs. If the Japanese had drawn off after the first fifteen minutes of their attacks, the damage done would have been terrific, but the enemy planes kept on strafing and bombing and the toll of ships, planes, and men soared.

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The Americans did not take their beating lying down. The first scattered shots from sentries ashore and watch standers who manned antiaircraft guns on board ship flashed back at the enemy even before the bugles and boatswains' pipes sounded "Call to Arms" and "General Quarters." The ships of the Pacific Fleet were on partial alert even in port and most of the officers and men were on board. Crew members poured up the ladders and passages from their berthing compartments to battle stations. While damage control teams tried to put down fires and shore up weakened bulkheads, gun crews let loose everything they had against the oncoming planes. In many cases guns were fired from positions awash as ships settled to the bottom and crewmen were seared with flames from fuel and ammunition fires as they continued to serve their weapons even after receiving orders to abandon ship. On many vessels the first torpedoes and bombs trapped men below deck and snuffed out the lives of others before they were even aware that the attack was on.

The reaction to the Japanese raid was fully as rapid at shore bases as it was on board ship, but the men at the airfields and the navy yard had far less to fight with. There was no ready ammunition at any antiaircraft gun position on the island; muzzles impotently pointed skyward while trucks were hurried to munitions depots. Small arms were broken out of armories at every point under attack; individuals manned the machine guns of damaged aircraft. The rage to strike back at the Japanese was so strong that men even fired pistols at the enemy planes as they swooped low to strafe.

At Ewa every Marine plane was knocked out of action in the first attack.

JAPANESE PHOTOGRAPH *of the sneak attack at Pearl Harbor showing the line of American battleships caught at their mooring near Ford Island. (USN 30550)*

JAPANESE LANDING ON GUAM *depicted by a propaganda artist who shows a portion of the troops and transports of the South Seas Detached Force. (SC 301167)*

Two squadrons of Japanese fighters swept in from the northwest at 1,000 feet and dived down to rake the aircraft parked near the runways with machine-gun and cannon fire. Pilots and air crewmen ran to their planes in an attempt to get them into the air or drag them out of the line of fire, but the Japanese returned again and again to complete the job of destruction. When the enemy fighters drew off at about 0825 they left behind a field littered with burning and shot-up aircraft.

The men of MAG–21 recovered quickly from their initial surprise and shock and fought back with what few rifles and machine guns they had. Salvageable guns were stripped from damaged planes and set up on hastily improvised mounts; one scout-bomber rear machine gun was manned to swell the volume of antiaircraft fire. Although the group commander, Lieutenant Colonel Claude A. Larkin, had been wounded almost as soon as he arrived at the field that morning, he continued to coordinate the efforts to meet further enemy attacks.

Two Japanese dive bombers streaked over the field from the direction of Pearl Harbor at 0835, dropping light fragmentation bombs and strafing the Marine gun positions. A few minutes after the bombers left, the first of a steady procession of enemy fighters attacked Ewa as the Japanese began assembling a cover force at nearby Barber's Point to protect the withdrawl of their strike groups. The Marine machine guns accounted for at least one of the enemy planes and claimed another probable. Two and three plane sections of fighters orbited over the field, and occasionally dived to strafe the gunners, until the last elements of the Japanese attack force headed out to sea around 0945.

Three of the Marine airmen were killed during the attacks, a fourth died of wounds; 13 wounded men were treated in the group's aid station. Flames demolished 33 of the 47 planes at the field; all but two of the remainder suffered major damage. The sole bright note in the picture of destruction was the fact that 18 of VMSB–231's planes were on board the *Lexington*, scheduled for a fly-off to Midway, and thereby saved from the enemy guns.

Within the same half hour that witnessed the loss of Ewa's planes, the possibility of effective aerial resistance was canceled out by similar enemy attacks all over Oahu. Ford Island's seaplane ramps and runways were made a shambles of wrecked and burning aircraft in the opening stage of the Japanese assault. The Marines of the air station's guard detachment manned rifles and machine guns to beat off further enemy thrusts, but the dive bombers had done their job well. There was no need for them to return. The focus of all attacks became the larger ships in the harbor.

The raid drew automatic reactions from the few Marines in the navy yard who saw the first enemy planes diving on the ships. While the guard bugler broke the majority of the men of the barracks detachment and the 1st and 3d Defense Battalions out of their quarters, the early risers were already running for the armories and gun sheds. By 0801 when Colonel Pickett ordered the defense battalion machine-gun groups to man their weapons, eight of the guns had already been set up. More machine guns were hastily put in position and men were detailed to belt the ammunition needed to feed them, while rifle ammunition was issued to the hundreds of men assembled on the barracks' parade ground. Pickett ordered the 3-inch antiaircraft guns in the defense battalions' reserve supplies to be taken out of storage and emplaced on the parade. He dispatched trucks and working parties of the 2d Engineer Battalion to Lualualei, 27 miles up in the hills, to get the necessary 3-inch shells. The Marine engineers also

sent their heavy earth-moving equipment to Hickam Field to help clear the runways.

Thirteen machine guns were in action by 0820 and the gunners had already accounted for their first enemy dive bomber. During the next hour and a half the fire of twenty-five more .30's and .50's was added to the yard's antiaircraft defenses, and two more planes, one claimed jointly with the ships, were shot down. The 3-inch guns were never able to get into action. The ammunition trucks did not return from the Lualualei depot until 1100, more than an hour after the last Japanese aircraft had headed back for their carriers. By that time the personnel of all Marine organizations in the navy yard area had been pooled to reinforce the guard and antiaircraft defense, to provide an infantry reserve, and to furnish the supporting transport and supply details needed to sustain them.

In the course of their attacks on battleship row and the ships in the navy yard's drydocks, the enemy planes had strafed and bombed the Marine barracks area, and nine men had been wounded. They were cared for in the dressing stations which Pickett had ordered set up at the beginning of the raid to accommodate the flow of wounded from the stricken ships in the harbor. Many of these casualties were members of the Marine ship detachments; 102 sea-going Marines had been killed during the raid, six later died of wounds, and 49 were wounded in action.[3]

The enemy pilots had scored heavily: four battleships, one mine layer, and a target ship sunk; four battleships, three cruisers, three destroyers, and three auxiliaries damaged. Most of the damaged ships required extensive repairs. American plane losses were equally high: 188 aircraft totally destroyed and 31 more damaged. The Navy and Marine Corps had 2,086 officers and men killed, the Army 194, as a result of the attack; 1,109 men of all the services survived their wounds.

Balanced against the staggering American totals was a fantastically light tally sheet of Japanese losses. The enemy carriers recovered all but 29 of the planes they had sent out; ship losses amounted to five midget submarines; and less than a hundred men were killed.

Despite extensive search missions flown from Oahu and from the *Enterprise*, which was less than 175 miles from port when the sneak attack occurred, the enemy striking force was able to withdraw undetected and unscathed. In one respect the Japanese were disappointed with the results of their raid; they had hoped to catch the Pacific Fleet's carriers berthed at Pearl Harbor. Fortunately, the urgent need for Marine planes to strengthen the outpost defenses had sent the *Lexington* and the *Enterprise* to sea on aircraft ferrying missions. The *Enterprise* was returning to Pearl on 7 December after having flown off VMF–211's fighters to Wake, and the *Lexington*, enroute to Midway with VMSB–231's planes, turned back when news of the attack was received. Had either or both of the carriers been sunk or damaged at Pearl Harbor, the outlook for the first months of the war would have been even more dismal. The Japanese success had the effect of delaying the schedule of retaliatory attacks and amphibious op-

[3] Casualty figures were compiled from records furnished by Statistics Unit, PersAcctSec, PersDept, HQMC.

erations in the Central Pacific that had been outlined in Rainbow 5. A complete reevaluation of Pacific strategy was necessary.

The critical situation facing the outpost islands was clearly appreciated and an attempt was made to get reinforcements to Wake before the Japanese struck; it did not come in time. The tiny atoll was one of the first objectives on the enemy timetable of conquest.[4] Midway was more fortunate; when the *Lexington* returned to Pearl on 10 December with its undelivered load of Marine scout bombers, they were ordered to attempt an over-water flight to the atoll. On 17 December, ten days after the originally scheduled fly-off, 17 planes of VMSB–231, shepherded by a naval patrol bomber, successfully made the 1,137-mile flight from Oahu to Midway. It was the longest single-engine landplane massed flight on record, but more important it marked a vital addition to Midway's defensive potential.

The outpost islands needed men and materiel as well as planes. Rear Admiral Claude C. Bloch, Commandant of the 14th Naval District, gave the responsibility for organizing and equipping these reinforcements to Colonel Pickett. On 13 December, all Marine ground troops in the district were placed under Pickett as Commanding Officer, Marine Forces, 14th Naval District. The necessary reinforcements to be sent to Midway, Johnston, and Palmyra were drawn from the 1st, 3d, and 4th Defense Battalions. By the month's end the first substantial increments of men, guns, and equipment had been received at each of the outposts.[5] They were not safe from attacks by any means, but their positions were markedly stronger.

[4] For the detailed story of the defense of Wake see Part III.

[5] CO, MarFor, 14th ND ltr to MGC, 5Jan42, Development of outpost garrisons.

GUAM FALLS [6]

The Washington Naval Disarmament Treaty of 1922 provided for the maintenance of the *status quo* in regard to fortifications and naval bases in certain areas of the Pacific. American adherence to these terms through the 14-year life of the treaty had the practical effect of weakening the defenses of the Philippines and preventing the development of Guam as a naval stronghold. The Hepburn Board of 1938 recommended that Guam be heavily fortified and garrisoned,[7] but Congress failed to authorize the expenditure of the necessary funds. Unhappily, the planners of Rainbow 5 had to concede the capture of the island in the first stages of a war with the Japanese. It was almost as if they could look over enemy shoulders and see the terse direction to the commander of the Japanese Fourth Fleet to "invade Wake and Guam as quickly as possible" [8] at the onset of hostilities. (See Map 2)

Guam was a fueling station for naval vessels making the long run to and from the Orient, a relay point for the trans-Pacific cable, the site of a naval radio station, and a stop for Pan American clippers. Assigned to protect its 20,000 natives and its 228 square miles of rugged, jungled terrain was a token force of 153

[6] Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from Maj O. R. Lodge, *The Recapture of Guam* (Washington: HistBr, G–3 Div, HQMC, 1954), 7–9; Capt G. J. McMillin, USN, OfiRept to the CNO of the Surrender of Guam to the Japanese, 11Sep45; T. Wilds, "The Japanese Seizure of Guam," *MC Gazette*, July 1955.

[7] Hepburn Board Rept, *op. cit.*

[8] *Hearings Record*, Part 13, Exhibit No. 8–C, CombFlt OpOrd No. 1, 5Nov41, 475.

Marines. Backing them up was a Guamanian infantry unit, the 80-man Insular Force Guard, and a volunteer native naval militia with 246 ill-armed and ill-trained members.[9] The island's government departments and naval station activities were manned by 271 regular Navy personnel. A naval officer, Captain George J. McMillin, was both island governor and garrison commander.

The war threat was so real by October 1941 that all women and children of U. S. citizenship were evacuated from Guam. On 6 December the garrison destroyed all its classified papers and like other Pacific outposts awaited the outcome of the U. S.-Japanese negotiations in Washington. The word came at 0545 on 8 December (7 December, Pearl Harbor time). Captain McMillin was informed of the enemy attack by the Commander in Chief of the Asiatic Fleet. In less than three hours Saipan-based Japanese bombers were over the island.

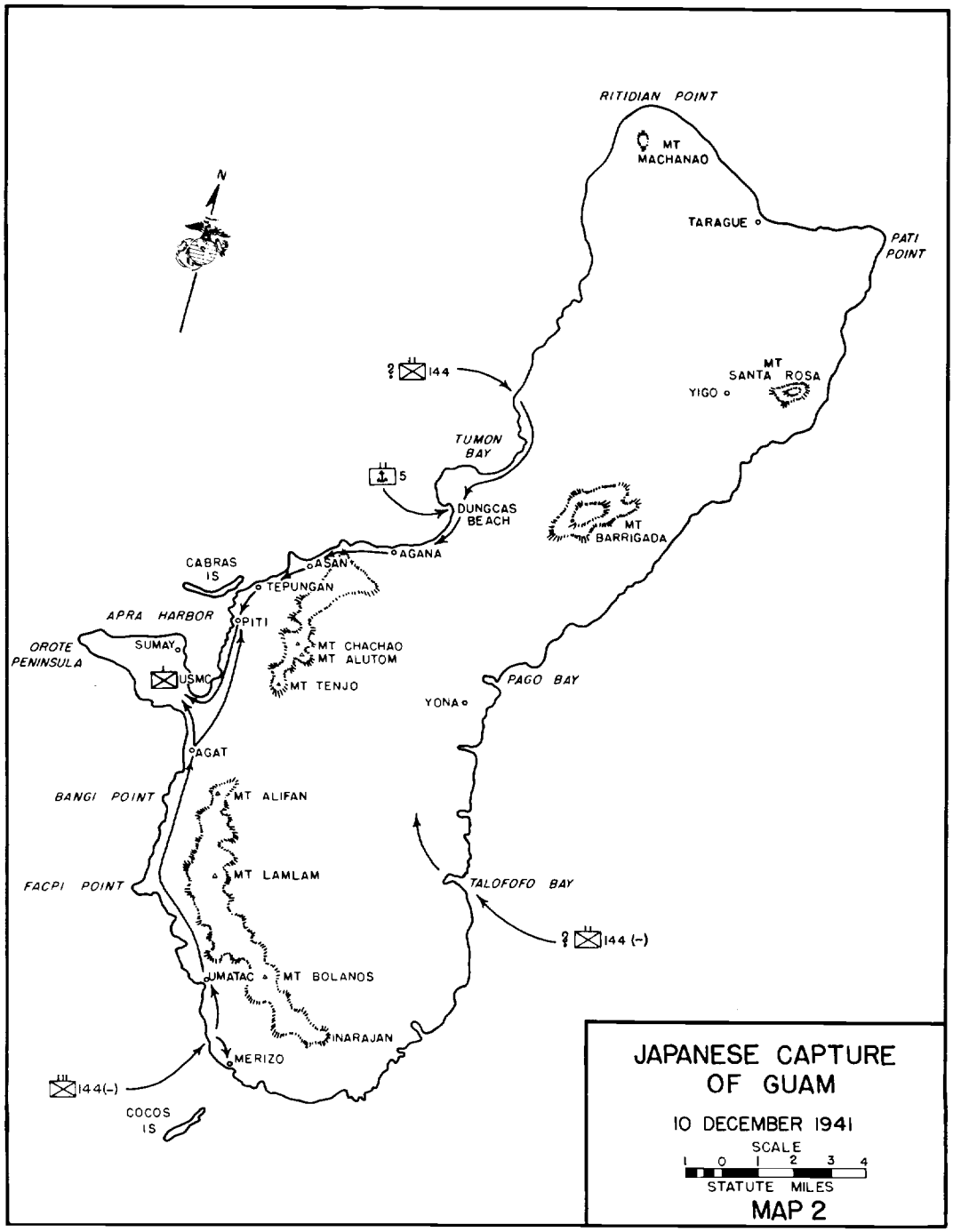
The initial enemy target was the mine sweeper USS *Penguin* in Apra Harbor; this small ship's 3-inch and .50 caliber guns were the only weapons larger than .30 caliber machine guns available to the Guam garrison. Under repeated attacks, the *Penguin* went to the bottom, and her survivors joined the forces ashore. The attack continued throughout the daylight hours with flights of bombers hitting the various naval installations and strafing roads and villages. The island capital, Agana, was cleared of civilians, and the few local Japanese were rounded up and interned.

That night a native dugout landed near Ritidian Point on the northern cape of the island, and the three men in it were captured. They claimed to be Saipan natives sent over to be on hand as interpreters when the Japanese landed. These natives insisted that the Japanese intended to land the next morning (9 December) on beaches near Agana. Captain McMillin suspected a trick. He believed that by this ruse the Japanese sought to draw the Marines out of their prepared positions in the butts of the rifle range at Sumay on Orote Peninsula. He decided not to allow this information to cause a shift of his major defensive force from a position which guarded important Apra Harbor.

By guess or knowledge the Saipan natives had one of the landing sites located accurately, but they were off on their time. The 9th brought no landing, but the bombers came back to give Guam another pounding. The Insular Force Guard was posted to protect government buildings in Agana, but the rest of the island's garrison remained at their assigned posts. Lieutenant Colonel William K. McNulty's 122 Marines of the Sumay barracks continued to improve their rifle range defenses, and the 28 Marines who were assigned to the Insular Patrol, the island's police force, kept their stations in villages throughout Guam.

After the Japanese bombers finished for the day all was quiet until about 0400 on 10 December. At that time flares burst over Dungcas Beach north of Agana, and some 400 Japanese sailors of the *5th Defense Force* from Saipan came ashore. While the naval landing party moved into Agana where it clashed with the Insular Force Guard, elements of the Japanese

[9] The members of the Insular Force Guard were in the U. S. Government service and received 50 percent of the pay of corresponding ratings in the U. S. Navy. The native militia served without pay and had no arms except obsolete and condemned rifles. RAdm G. J. McMillin ltr to CMC, 3Nov52.


RITIDIAN POINT
MT MACHANAO
TARAGUE
PATI POINT
N
144
MT SANTA ROSA
YIGO
TUMON BAY
5
DUNGCAS BEACH
MT BARRIGADA
AGANA
CABRAS IS
ASAN
TEPUNGAN
APRA HARBOR
PITI
SUMAY
OROTE PENINSULA
USMC
MT CHACHAO
MT ALUTOM
MT TENJO
PAGO BAY
YONA
AGAT
BANGI POINT
MT ALIFAN
MT LAMLAM
FACPI POINT
TALOFOFO BAY
144 (-)
UMATAC
MT BOLANOS
INARAJAN
MERIZO
144(-)
COCOS IS
JAPANESE CAPTURE OF GUAM
10 DECEMBER 1941
SCALE
1 0 1 2 3 4
STATUTE MILES
MAP 2

South Seas Detached Force (approximately 5,500 men) [10] made separate landings at Tumon Bay in the north, on the southwest coast near Merizo, and on the eastern shore of the island at Talafofo Bay.

At Agana's plaza the lightly-armed Guamanians, commanded by Marine First Lieutenant Charles S. Todd, stood off the early Japanese attacks, but their rifles and machine guns did not provide enough firepower to hold against a coordinated attack by the Dungcas Beach landing force. Captain McMillin, aware of the overwhelming superiority of the enemy, decided not to endanger the lives of the thousands of civilians in his charge by further and fruitless resistance. "The situation was simply hopeless," he later related.[11] He surrendered the island to the Japanese naval commander shortly after 0600, and sent orders to the Marines at Sumay not to resist. The word did not reach all defenders, however, and scattered fighting continued throughout the day as the enemy spread out to complete occupation of the island. But this amounted to only token resistance. There was no chance that the determined Japanese might be driven off by a force so small, even if the defenders could have regrouped. Guam had fallen, and it would be two and a half years before the United States was in a position to win it back.

[10] This reinforced brigade, commanded by MajGen Tomitara Horii, had been organized in November 1941 to take part in the capture of Guam and to move on from there to seize Rabaul in the Bismarcks. It was built around the 144th InfRegt and reinforced by units of the Japanese 55th Division. MIDiv, WD, Order of Battle for Japanese Armed Forces, 1Mar45, 122.

[11] McMillin Surrender Rept, *op. cit.*

During the two days of bombing and in the fighting on 10 December, the total garrison losses were 19 killed and 42 wounded including four Marines killed and 12 wounded.[12] The civilian population suffered comparable but undetermined casualties. The Japanese evacuated American members of the garrison to prison camps in Japan on 10 January 1942, and the enemy naval force that had been present at the surrender settled down to duty as occupation troops.

FIRST ATTACK ON MIDWAY [13]

Part of the Japanese striking force which raided Pearl Harbor was a task unit of two destroyers and a tanker which proceeded independently from Tokyo Bay to a separate target—Midway. The mission of the destroyers was implied in their designation as the Midway Neutralization Unit; they were to shell the atoll's air base on the night of 7 December while the Japanese carrier force retired from the Hawaiian area. (See Map 10, Map Section)

Dawn of 7 December found five seaplanes of Midway's patrol bomber squadron (VP–21) aloft on routine search missions; two other (Dutch) patrol bombers had just taken off for Wake, next leg of their journey to the Netherlands East Indies. On the Sand Island seaplane ramp two more PBYs (Catalina patrol

[12] Marine casualty figures were compiled from records furnished by the Statistics Unit. PersAcctSec, PersDept, HQMC.

[13] Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *Hearings Records*, Part 24, Exhibit No. 34, "History of Action Occurring at Midway 7–31Dec41 as Compiled from Official Dispatches and Correspondence," Exhibit No. 35, CO, NAS, Midway ltr to CinCPac, Action of 7Dec41, n. d., and Exhibit No. 36, CO, 6th DefBn ltr to ComFourteen, Rept of action on the night of 7Dec41, 12Dec41; *Marines at Midway.*

bombers) were warming up to guide in VMSB–231 which was scheduled to fly off the *Lexington* that day. At 0630 (0900 Pearl Harbor time) a Navy radio operator's signal from Oahu flashed the first news of the Pearl Harbor attack. A few minutes later a dispatch from Admiral Bloch confirmed this report and directed that current war plans be placed in effect.

Commander Cyril T. Simard, the Island Commander, recalled the Dutch PBYs (which were then put to use by VP–21), established additional air search sectors, and ordered Lieutenant Colonel Harold D. Shannon's 6th Defense Battalion to general quarters. The remainder of the day was spent in preparation for blackout, and in issuing ammunition, digging foxholes, and testing communications. All lights and navigational aids were extinguished after it was learned that the *Lexington*, with VMSB–231 still on board, had been diverted to seek the enemy's Pearl Harbor striking force.

Air searches returned late in the day without having sighted any signs of Japanese ships or planes, and the atoll buttoned up for the night with all defensive positions fully manned. At 1842, a Marine lookout saw a flashing light some distance southwest of Sand Island, but it quickly disappeared, and it was about 2130 before the one operational radar on Sand began picking up what seemed to be surface targets in the same general direction. Simultaneously two other observers, equipped with powerful 8x56 night glasses, reported seeing "shapes" to seaward.

Shannon's searchlight battery commander, First Lieutenant Alfred L. Booth, requested permission to illuminate, but his request was turned down. Senior officers did not want to risk premature disclosure of defensive positions. It was also erroneously believed that friendly ships were in the area, and there were strict orders against illuminating or firing without specific orders.[14]

The apprehension of these observers was justified. The Japanese destroyers *Akebono* and *Ushio* had left their tanker *Shiriya* at a rendezvous point some 15 miles away and made landfall on the atoll at about 2130. By the time Lieutenant Booth had been cautioned about his searchlights, the two enemy ships had their guns trained on Midway and were ready to make their first firing run. The firing began at 2135.

The first salvos fell short, but as the destroyers closed range on a northeast course the shells began to explode on Sand Island. The initial hits struck near Battery A's 5-inch seacoast guns at the south end of the island, and subsequent rounds bracketed the island's power plant, a reinforced concrete structure used also as the command post of a .50 caliber antiaircraft machine-gun platoon. One round came through an air vent and exploded inside the building. The Japanese ships then suspended fire while they closed on the atoll for a second firing run.

In the island's power plant First Lieutenant George H. Cannon, although severely wounded, directed the re-establishment of wrecked communications and the evacuation of other wounded. He refused evacuation for his own wounds until after Corporal Harold R. Hazelwood had put the switchboard back in operation. Cannon died a few minutes after reaching the

[14] LtCol A. L. Booth ltr to CMC, 27Jan48, hereinafter cited as *Booth;* LtCol L. S. Fraser ltr to CMC, hereinafter cited as *Fraser*.

aid station, but for this action he received posthumous award of the Medal of Honor. He was the first Marine so honored in World War II.

Meanwhile the enemy ships opened fire again, this time at closer range, and Commander Simard ordered Shannon to engage targets of opportunity. Japanese shells set the roof of the seaplane hangar on Sand ablaze, lighting up the target for the enemy gunners, and accurate salvos struck the Pan American radio installation, the island laundry, and adjacent shops. At 2153 the Marine searchlight crews got Shannon's orders to illuminate, but by then only the light on the south end of Sand could bear on the ships. This light silhouetted the *Akebono* about 2,500 yards south of the island, before a near miss from one of the destroyers put it out of commission. Crewmen reacted immediately to get the light back in action and on target, but Battery A's 5-inchers stayed silent because communication damage had prevented passing of Shannon's command to open fire.[15]

But Captain Jean H. Buckner, commanding Battery D's 3-inch antiaircraft guns, could now see the large Japanese battle flag on the *Akebono's* foremast, and he ordered his guns into action. Splashes could not be made out, although illumination was excellent, and Buckner's fire controlmen were positive that the shells were either passing through the ships' superstructures or into their hulls. Battery B (First Lieutenant Rodney M. Handley) on Eastern Island now added its 5-inch fire to the battle and .50 caliber machine guns opened up on the targets which were well within range. This firing from the Marine batteries kept up for five minutes before the Japanese succeeded in knocking out the searchlight. Although some observers believed that the *Ushio* had also been hulled, results of this Marine fire have never been determined.[16] Both Japanese ships retired soon after the light was shot out and a Pan American clipper captain flying overhead that night en route from Wake reported seeing an intense fire on the surface of the sea and the wakes of two ships on the logical retirement course of the destroyers. Both enemy ships, however, returned to Japan safely, despite any damage that might have been done by the Marine guns.

The enemy fire had cost the 6th Defense Battalion two killed and ten wounded;[17] two men from the naval air station were killed and nine wounded. Material damage on Midway was not too severe and was confined to Sand Island; the airfield on Eastern Island was not touched. The seaplane hangar had burned, although the frame was still intact, and one plane was lost in the flames. Another PBY was badly damaged by shell fragments, and fragments also caused minor damage to a number of buildings. The garrison had stood off its first Japanese attack, but there was little comfort in this. The defenders estimated—correctly—that the enemy would be back sooner or later with a much more serious threat.

With the outbreak of war, completion of the coastal and antiaircraft defenses of Midway took first priority and Marines were treated to the welcome and unusual

[15] *Booth; Fraser;* Col L. A Holm ltr to CMC, 30Jan48.

[16] The *Ushio*, evidently a very lucky ship, was the only enemy vessel that took part in the Pearl Harbor attack that was still afloat on V–J Day.

[17] Casualty figures were compiled from records

[17] Casualty figures were compiled from records furnished by Statistics Unit, PersAcctSec,

sight of the civilian contractor's heavy equipment turned to on dugout and battery construction. Authorities at Pearl Harbor were determined to get reinforcements to the atoll and within a week after VMSB–231 made its historic long flight from Oahu, two batteries of the 4th Defense Battalion with additional naval 3-inch and 7-inch guns for coast defense were being unloaded. On Christmas, the Brewster Buffaloes of VMF–221 flew in from the *Saratoga* which had been rushed out to Pearl from San Diego after the Japanese attack. This carrier had taken part in the abortive attempt to relieve Wake. The next day the island received another contingent of 4th Defense Battalion men, the ground echelon of VMF–221, and much needed defense materiel when the seaplane tender *Tangier*, which had also been headed for Wake, unloaded at Midway instead. By the end of December the atoll, which was now Hawaii's most important outpost, had for its garrison a heavily reinforced defense battalion, a Marine scout-bomber and a fighter squadron, and VP–21's patrol bombers. Midway was in good shape to greet the Japanese if they came back, and the passage of every month in the new year made the atoll a tougher nut to crack.[18]

THE SOUTHERN OUTPOSTS[19]

Tiny Johnston Island, set off by itself in the open sea southwest of Hawaii, proved to be a favorite target of Japanese submarines in the first month of the war. It was too close to the Pacific Fleet base at Pearl and too limited in area to make it a prize worth risking an amphibious assault, but its strategic location, like an arrowhead pointing at the Japanese Marshalls, made damage to its air facilities well worth the risk of bombardment attempts. The airfield on the atoll's namesake, Johnston Island, was only partially completed on 7 December, but temporary seaplane handling facilities were in operation at Sand Islet, the only other land area within the fringing reef. There was no permanent patrol plane complement, but Johnston was an important refueling stop and a couple of PBYs were usually anchored in the lagoon.

The news of the outbreak of war created a flurry of activity on Johnston, and the civilian contractor's employees turned to at top speed to erect additional earthworks around the Marine guns and to prepare bomb shelters.[20] No Japanese ship or submarine made its appearance on 7 December, perhaps because the first day of war found the *Indianapolis* and five destroyer minesweepers at Johnston testing the performance of the Higgins landing boat on coral reefs.[21] These ships were

[18] See Part V, "The Battle of Midway" for the story of the events leading up to the decisive naval action which took place at Midway in June 1942.

[19] Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *Hearings Record*, Part 24, Exhibit No. 27, "History of Action Occurring at Palmyra Island 7–31Dec41, As Compiled from Official Dispatches and Correspondence," Exhibit No. 28, "History of the Action Occurring at Johnston Island 7–31Dec41, As Compiled from Official Dispatches and Correspondence," Exhibit No. 31, CO, NAS, PalmyraIs ltr to ComFourteen, 24Dec41,, and Exhibit No. 32, CO, NAS, JohnstonIs ltr to ComFourteen, 19Dec41; CO, NAS, JohnstonIs ltr to ComFourteen, 22Dec41; MarGarFor, Pac File C–1455–40–5, "Defense-Fortification Johnston Island," 12Sep41–13Jun43; MarGarFor, Pac File C–1455–40–15, "Defense-Fortification Palmyra Islands," 26Sep41–30Jun43.

[20] CO, NAS, JohnstonIs, Progress and Readiness Rept, 15Dec41.

[21] *Hearings Record*, Part 23, 758–759.

immediately recalled toward Pearl to form part of the extensive search pattern for the enemy carrier force, and Johnston's defense rested with its own slim garrison. Major Francis B. Loomis, Jr., Executive Officer of the 1st Defense Battalion, caught while returning to Pearl by air from an inspection of the western outposts, assumed command of the Johnston detachment as senior Marine officer present.

Shortly after dark on 12 December a submarine surfaced 8,000 yards off Sand Islet and began firing green star clusters which burst high over the island. The 5-inch battery could not pick up the vessel in its sights, but it fired one star shell in the general direction of the submarine. The submarine ceased firing immediately as she evidently was not seeking a duel.

The next enemy attack came at dusk three days later. The supply ship *Burrows* had delivered a barge load of supplies originally intended for the Wake garrison and picked up 77 civilian construction employees for return to Pearl when a sentry atop Johnston's water tower spotted a flash to seaward and sounded general quarters. The flash had been spotted by the batteries also, and the 5-inch control estimated the range at 9,000 yards. The 3-inch director and height finder made out two ships, one larger than the other. The first two enemy salvos bracketed Johnston and the third struck near the contractor's power house and set off a 1,200-gallon oil tank which immediately fired the building. A strong wind whipped up 50-foot flames from the oil fire, and "as observed from the Naval Air Station at Sand Islet, Johnston Island seemed doomed." [22] The Japanese continued to fire for ten minutes at this well-lighted target and they hit several other buildings. The 5-inch guns delivered searching fire, and just as the Marines were convinced they were hitting close aboard their targets, the enemy fire ceased abruptly.

The enemy vessels had fired from the obscuring mists of a small squall and spotters ashore never clearly saw their targets, but the defenders believed that they had engaged two surface vessels, probably a light cruiser and a destroyer. Later analysis indicated, however, that one or more submarines had made this attack. Fortunately no one in the garrison was hurt by the enemy fire, although flames and fragments caused considerable damage to the power house and water distilling machinery. The *Burrows*, although clearly outlined by the fire, was not harmed. The fact that its anchorage area was known to be studded with submerged coral heads probably discouraged the Japanese from attempting an underwater attack, and Johnston's 5-inch battery ruled out a surface approach.

During the exchange of fire one of the Marines' 5-inch guns went out of action. Its counter-recoil mechanism failed. After this the long-range defense of the island rested with one gun until 18 December when two patrol bombers from Pearl arrived to join the garrison. This gun was enough, however, to scare off an enemy submarine which fired star shells over Sand Islet after dark on 21 December. Again the simple expedient of firing in the probable direction of the enemy was enough to silence the submarine. The

[22] *Ibid.*, Part 24, Exhibit No. 32, CO, NAS, JohnstonIs ltr to ComFourteen, 19Dec41.

next night, just as the ready duty PBY landed in the lagoon, another submarine, perhaps the same one that had fired illumination over Sand, fired six shells at the islets. Both 5-inchers on Johnston now were back in action and each gun fired ten rounds before the submarine submerged. The patrol plane was just lifting from the water as the last enemy shot was fired. Only one shell hit Sand, but that one knocked down the CAA homing tower and slightly wounded one Marine.

Johnston Island was clearly a discouraging place to attack, and the shelling of 22 December marked the last enemy attempt at surface bombardment. It was just as well that the Japanese decided to avoid Johnston, because reinforcement from Pearl soon had the atoll bursting at its seams with men and guns. An additional 5-inch and a 3-inch battery, 16 more machine guns, and the men to man them arrived on 30 December. In January a provisional infantry company was sent and eventually the garrison included even light tanks. The expected permanent Marine fighter complement never got settled in at Johnston's airfield. The island became instead a ferrying and refueling stop for planes going between Pearl and the South and Southwest Pacific.

Palmyra, 900 miles southeast of Johnston, also figured in the early development of a safe plane route to the southern theater of war. But before the atoll faded from the action reports it too got a taste of the gunfire of a Japanese submarine. At dawn on 24 December an enemy raider surfaced 3,000 yards south of the main island and began firing on the dredge *Sacramento* which was anchored in the lagoon and clearly visible between two of Palmyra's numerous tiny islets. Only one hit was registered before the fire of the 5-inch battery drove the submarine under. Damage to the dredge was minor and no one was injured.

Colonel Pickett's command at Pearl Harbor had organized strong reinforcements for Palmyra and these arrived before the end of December. Lieutenant Colonel Bert A. Bone, Commanding Officer of the 1st Defense Battalion, arrived with the additional men, guns, and equipment to assume command of the defense force. On 1 March the official designation of the Marine garrison on Palmyra was changed to 1st Defense Battalion and former 1st Battalion men at other bases were absorbed by local commands. The Marine Detachment at Johnston became a separate unit.

After these submarine attacks of December, Palmyra and Johnston drop from the pages of an operational history. The atolls had served their purpose well; they guarded a vulnerable flank of the Hawaiian Islands at a time when such protection was a necessity. While the scene of active fighting shifted westward the garrisons remained alert, and when conditions permitted it many of the men who had served out the first hectic days of the war on these lonely specks in the ocean moved on to the beachheads of the South and Central Pacific.

The Southern Lifeline

STRATEGIC REAPPRAISAL[1]

In December 1941 reverse followed reverse in the fortunes of the Allies in the Pacific. The Japanese seemed to be everywhere at once and everywhere successful. Setbacks to the enemy schedule of conquest were infrequent and temporary. On the Asian mainland Hong Kong fell and Japanese troops advanced steadily down the Malay Peninsula toward Singapore. In the Philippines Manila was evacuated and American-Filipino forces retreated to Bataan and Corregidor for a last-ditch stand. To the south the first Japanese landing had been made on Borneo, and superior enemy forces prepared to seize the Netherlands East Indies. The capture of Wake and Guam gave the Japanese effective control over the Central Pacific from the China coast to Midway and Johnston. (See Map 1, Map Section)

By the turn of the year only the sea area between the Hawaiian Islands and the United States and the supply route from the States through the South Pacific to New Zealand and Australia were still in Allied hands. The responsibility for holding open the lines of communication to the Anzac area[2] rested primarily with the U. S. Pacific Fleet. On 31 December that fleet came under the command of the man who was to direct its operations until Japan unconditionally surrendered—Admiral Chester W. Nimitz (CinCPac).

As soon as he arrived at Pearl Harbor, Nimitz was given a dispatch from Admiral Ernest J. King, the newly appointed Commander in Chief, United States Fleet (CinCUS, later abbreviated as CominCh). King's message outlined Nimitz's two primary tasks as CinCPac. He was to use his ships, planes, and men in:

(1) Covering and holding the Hawaii-Midway line and maintaining its communications with the west coast.

(2) Maintaining communications between the west coast and Australia, chiefly by covering, securing and holding the Hawaii-Samoa line, which should be extended to include Fiji at the earliest possible date.[3]

Although the Japanese had severely damaged the Pacific Fleet in their Pearl Harbor raid, they had concentrated on

[1] Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *The War Reports of General of the Army George C. Marshall—General of the Army H. H. Arnold—Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King* (Philadelphia & New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1947), hereinafter cited as *War Reports;* FAdm E. J. King and Cdr W. M. Whitehill, *Fleet Admiral King: A Naval Record* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1952) hereinafter cited as *King's Naval Record; Strategic Planning.*

[2] Anzac is actually the abbreviation for Australian and New Zealand Army Corps used in WW I, but the term was so understandable and easy to use in reference to the two Commonwealth nations that it was adopted in the Pacific War and applied frequently to the geographic area in which they lay.

[3] *King's Naval Record,* 353–354.

ships rather than installations, and the repair facilities of the navy yard were virtually untouched. Round-the-clock work promptly restored to operation many vessels which might otherwise have been lost for good or long delayed in their return to fleet service. But Nimitz's strength was not enough to hazard a large scale amphibious offensive, even with the addition of reinforcements sent from the Atlantic Fleet. In the first few months of 1942, Allied strategists had to be content with defensive operations. The few local attacks they mounted were hit-and-run raids which did little more than boost homefront and service morale at a time when most news dealt with defeat and surrender.

From 22 December to 14 January, the political and military leaders of the United States and Great Britain met in Washington (the ARCADIA Conference) to chart the course of Allied operations against the Axis powers. The Americans, despite the enormity of the Japanese attack, reaffirmed their decision of ABC–1 that Germany was the predominant enemy and its defeat would be decisive in the outcome of the war. The Pacific was hardly considered a secondary theater, but the main strength of the Allied war effort was to be applied in the European, African, and Middle Eastern areas. Sufficient men and materiel would be committed to the battle against Japan to allow the gradual assumption of the offensive.

One result of the ARCADIA meetings was the organization of the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS), a supreme military council whose members were the chiefs of services in Great Britain and the United States. The CCS was charged with the strategic direction of the war, subject only to the review of the political heads of state. The necessity of presenting a united American view in CCS discussions led directly to the formation of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) as the controlling agency of American military operations.

On 9 February 1942, the first formal meeting of General George C. Marshall (Chief of Staff, United States Army), Lieutenant General Henry H. Arnold (Chief of the Army Air Corps), Admiral Harold R. Stark (CNO), and Admiral King (CominCh) took place. Except for the combination of the offices of CominCh and CNO in the person of Admiral King which took effect on 26 March (Admiral Stark became Commander U. S. Naval Forces Europe) and the addition of Admiral William D. Leahy as Chief of Staff to the President on 20 July, the membership of the JCS remained constant for the duration of the war. As far as the Marine Corps was concerned their representative on the JCS was Admiral King, and he was consistently a champion of the use of Marines at their greatest potential—as specially trained and equipped amphibious assault troops.[4]

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[4] On 13Apr51, before a subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Armed Services, Gen Holcomb stated that he was called in during the ARCADIA conferences and "sat as a member of that group." Later " . . . a formal organization occurred in which I was not included. However, because of my intercourse with Admiral Stark I was in on nearly all of the discussions that took place." This intimate relationship changed, however, when Stark was relieved as CNO on 26Mar42. An interesting sequel to this story of the "exclusion" of the Commandant from the JCS was revealed by Gen Holcomb when he further related how after a dinner party

On 10 January 1942, the CCS, acting with the approval of Prime Minister Churchill and President Roosevelt, set up a unified, inter-Allied command in the western Pacific to control defensive operations against the Japanese along a broad sweep of positions from Burma through Luzon to New Guinea. The commander of ABDA (American-British-Dutch-Australian) forces holding the barrier zone was the British Commander in Chief in India, General Sir Archibald P. Wavell; his ABDA air, naval, and ground commanders were respectively an Englishman, an American, and a Dutchman. But ABDA Command had no chance to stop the Japanese in the East Indies, Malaya, or the Philippines. Wavell's forces were beaten back, cut off, or defeated before he could be reached by reinforcements that could make a significant difference in the fighting. By the end of February Singapore had fallen and the ABDA area was split by an enemy thrust to Sumatra. Wavell returned to India to muster troops to block Japanese encroachment into Burma. On 1 March ABDA Command was formally dissolved.

Although this first attempt at unified Allied command was short-lived and unsuccessful, it set a pattern which governed operational control of the war through its remaining years. This pattern amounted to the selection as over-all commander of a theater of an officer from the nation having the most forces in that particular theater. His principal subordinates were appointed from other nations also having interests and forces there. Realistically, the CCS tried to equate theater responsibility with national interest. On 3 March the Combined Chiefs approved for the western Pacific a new dividing line which cut through the defunct ABDA area. Burma and all Southeast Asia west of a north-south line between Java and Sumatra were added to Wavell's Indian command and the British Chiefs of Staffs were charged with the strategic direction of this theater. The whole Pacific east of the new line was given over to American JCS control.

The Joint Chiefs divided the Pacific into two strategic entities, one in which the Navy would have paramount interests, the Pacific Ocean Area (POA), and the other in which the Army would be the dominant service, the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA). (See Map 1, Map Section for boundary.) Naval planners had successfully insisted in JCS discussions that all positions such as New Caledonia, the New Hebrides, and New Zealand which guarded the line of communications from Pearl Harbor to Australia must be controlled by the Navy. In terms of the air age, the JCS division of the Pacific gave the Army operational responsibility for

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at the White House in July 1943, the President, associating himself with the Marine Corps, had said to him confidentially: "You know, the first thing you know we are going to be left out of things. We are not represented on the Joint Chiefs of Staff . . . . how would you like to be a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff?" Holcomb replied that he would like it very much but didn't know how the Joint Chiefs would feel about it. That was the last, however, that Holcomb ever heard of this matter directly or officially. Senate Committee on Armed Services, 82d Congress, Hearings on S. 667, "A Bill to Fix the Personnel Strength of the United States Marine Corps and to make the Commandant of the Marine Corps a Permanent Member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff" (Washington: GPO, 1951), 34–36.

an area of large land masses lying relatively close together where land power supported by shore-based air could be decisive. To the Navy the JCS assigned the direction of the war in a vast sea area with widely scattered island bases where the carrier plane reigned supreme.

The American commander in the Philippines, General Douglas MacArthur, was the Joint Chiefs' choice to take over direction of SWPA operations; Admiral Nimitz was selected to head POA activities. Formal announcement of the new set-up was not made until MacArthur had escaped from Corregidor and reached safety in Australia. On 18 March, with the consent of the Australian government, MacArthur was announced as Supreme Commander of the SWPA (CinCSWPA) The JCS directive outlining missions for both Pacific areas was issued on 30 March, and the confirmation of Nimitz as Commander in Chief of the POA (CinCPOA) followed on 3 April. By CCS and JCS agreement, both commanders were to have operational control over any force, regardless of service or nation, that was assigned to their respective theaters.

Nimitz still retained his command of the Pacific Fleet in addition to his duties as CinCPOA. The fleet's striking arm, its carriers and their supporting vessels, stayed under Nimitz as CinCPac no matter where they operated. In the final analysis, however, the major decisions on employment of troops, ships, and planes were made in Washington with the advice of the theater commanders. MacArthur was a subordinate of Marshall and reported through him to the JCS; an identical command relationship existed between Nimitz and King.

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SAMOAN BASTION [5]

The concern felt in Washington for the security of the southern route to Australia was acute in the days and weeks immediately following the Pearl Harbor attack. Despite world-wide demands on the troops and equipment of a nation just entering the war, General Marshall and Admiral King gave special attention to the need for holding positions that would protect Australia's lifeline. Garrison forces, most of them provided by the Army, moved into the Pacific in substantial strength to guard what the Allies still held and to block further Japanese advances. Between January and April nearly 80,000 Army troops left the States for Pacific bases.

An infantry division was sent to Australia to take the place of Australian units committed to the fighting in the Middle East. At the other end of the lifeline, a new division was added to the Hawaiian Island garrison. Mixed forces of infantry, coast and antiaircraft artillery, and air corps units were established in early February at Canton and Christmas Islands, southwest and south of Pearl Harbor. At about the same time a New Zealand ground garrison reinforced by American pursuit planes moved into the Fiji Islands, and a small garrison was sent to the French-owned Society Islands to guard the eastern approaches to the supply route. In March a task force of

[5] Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from HqDeFor Rept of SamoanGru AdvB Facilities, 100ct42; 2d MarBrig AnRept, 16Jul42; 2d MarBrig Diary, 23Dec41–30Jun42; CG 3d MarBrig ltr to CMC, 10Sep43; 3d MarBrig Brief of Ops, 21Mar42–31Aug43; MAG–13 War Diary, 1Mar42–31May43; Hist of the 7th DefBn, 21Dec42; *Strategic Planning.*

almost division strength arrived in New Caledonia and the Joint Chiefs sent additional Army garrison forces to Tongatabu in the Tonga Islands, south of Samoa, and north to Efate in the New Hebrides. By the end of March 1942 the supply route to Australia ran through a corridor of burgeoning island strong points and the potential threat of major Japanese attacks had been substantially lessened. (See Map 1, Map Section and Map 3)

Actually the initial Japanese war plan contemplated no advances into the South Pacific to cut the line of communications to Australia. The Allied leaders, however, can be forgiven for not being clairvoyant on this point, for the enemy's chance to seize blocking positions along the lifeline was quite apparent. Samoa seemed to be one of the most inviting targets and its tiny garrison of Marines wholly inadequate to stand off anything but a minor raid. The necessity for building up Samoan defenses as a prelude for further moves to Fiji and New Caledonia had been recognized by Admiral King in his instructions to Nimitz to hold the Hawaiian-Samoa line,[6] and reinforcements from the States to back up those instructions were underway from San Diego by 6 January. These men, members of the 2d Marine Brigade, were the forerunners of a host of Marines who passed through the Samoan area and made it the major Marine base in the Pacific in the first year of the war.

Only two weeks' time was necessary to organize, assemble, and load out the 2d Brigade. Acting on orders from the Commandant, the 2d Marine Division activated the brigade on 24 December at Camp Elliott, outside of San Diego. The principal units assigned to the new command were the 8th Marines, the 2d Battalion, 10th Marines, and the 2d Defense Battalion (dispatched by rail from the east coast). Colonel (later Brigadier General) Henry L. Larsen was named brigade commander. A quick estimate was made of the special engineering equipment which the brigade would need to accomplish one of its most important missions—completion of the airfield at Tutuila. Permission was obtained to expend up to $200,000 in the commercial market for the purchase of such earth-moving equipment as could not be supplied from quartermaster stocks. When the first cargo ship arrived at San Diego on New Year's day, the brigade went on a round-the-clock loading schedule. Sixty-two hours later all assigned personnel and gear had been loaded and the 4,798 officers and men were on their way to Tutuila.

When the news of Pearl Harbor reached Samoa, Lieutenant Colonel Lester A. Dessez, commanding the 7th Defense Battalion, ordered his troops to man their positions. The Samoan Marine Reserve Battalion was called to active duty and assigned to reinforce the defenses. Despite a spate of rumors and false alarms, no sign of the Japanese was evident until the night of 11 January, when a submarine shelled the naval station for about seven minutes from a position 10,000–15,000 yards off the north shore where the coast defense guns could not bear. The station suffered only light damage from the shells, some of which fell harmlessly into the bay, and two men were wounded slightly by fragments. The Marines remained on alert but received no further visits from the enemy.

[6] *King's Naval Record*, 354.

On 19 January radar picked up signs of numerous ships, and observation stations on the island's headlands soon confirmed the arrival of the 2d Brigade.

While still at sea, General Larsen had received orders from the Navy Department appointing him Military Governor of American Samoa and giving him responsibility for the islands' defense as well as supervisory control over the civil government. As soon as the ships docked antiaircraft machine guns of the 2d Defense Battalion were promptly unloaded and set up in the hills around Pago Pago harbor. The 8th Marines took over beach defense positions occupied by the 7th Defense Battalion and immediately began improving and expanding them. The artillerymen of 2/10 and the 2d Defense set up their guns in temporary positions while they went to work on permanent emplacements. Navy scouting amphibians of a shore-based squadron (VS–1–D14) attached to the brigade soon were aloft on a busy schedule of antisubmarine and reconnaissance missions.

The airfield on Tutuila was only 10 per cent completed when Larsen arrived, but he directed that construction be pushed around the clock, work to go on through the night under lights. He also detailed the brigade's engineer company to assist the civilian contractors in getting the field in shape. For the 2d Brigade's first three months in Samoa, its days were filled with defense construction. There was little time for any combat training not intimately connected with the problems of Samoan defense. The work was arduous, exacting, and even frustrating, since the brigade had arrived during the rainy season and the frequent tropical rainstorms had a habit of destroying in minutes the results of hours of pick and shovel work.

General Larsen took immediate steps after his arrival in American Samoa to ascertain the status of the defenses in Western (British) Samoa, 40 or so miles northwest of Tutuila. On 26 January the brigade intelligence officer, Lieutenant Colonel William L. Bales, flew to Apia, the seat of government on the island of Upolu, to confer with the New Zealand authorities and make a reconnaissance of Upolu and Savaii, the two principal islands. The New Zealanders were quite anxious to cooperate with the Marines since they had a defense force of only 157 men to guard two large islands with a combined coastline of over 250 miles. Bales, whose investigation was aimed primarily at discovering the feasibility of developing either or both of the islands into a military base, reported back that Upolu's harbor facilities, road net, and several potential airfield sites made it readily susceptible to base development. He found, on the other hand, that Savaii had no safe major anchorages and that its lava-crusted surface did "not offer airfield sites that could be developed quickly by the Japanese or anyone else." [7] On his return to Tutuila, Lieutenant Colonel Bales reported to General Larsen that:

> In its present unprotected state, Western Samoa is a hazard of first magnitude for the defense of American Samoa. The conclusion is unescapable that if we don't occupy it the Japanese will and there may not be a great deal of time left.[8]

Naval authorities in Washington and Pearl Harbor recognized the desirability

[7] LtCol W. L. Bales ltr to CG, 2d MarBrig, 8Feb42, Rept on Recon in Western Samoa, 8.

[8] *Ibid.*, 10.

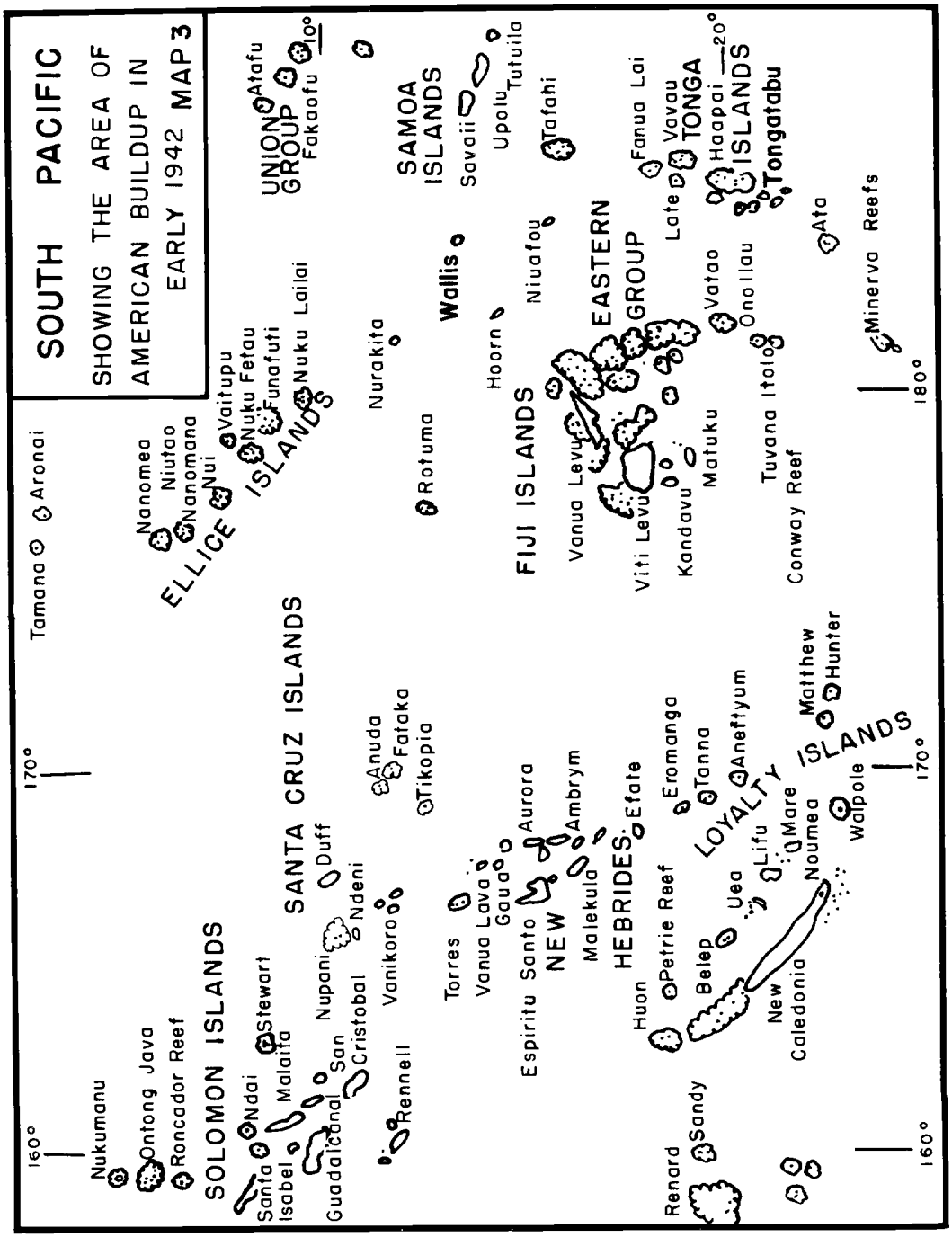
of occupying Western Samoa and extended their interest to include Wallis (Uea) Island, a small French possession 320 miles from Tutuila on the western approaches to Samoa. Negotiations were entered into with New Zealand regarding the defense of Western Samoa, and the Free French government in regard to the occupation of Wallis. In March warning orders were sent out to Larsen's brigade and both marine divisions to be prepared to furnish troops for the garrisoning of Western Samoa and Wallis.[9] Negotiations for the use of land and other facilities in Western Samoa were completed on 20 March when Larsen and a New Zealand representative signed an agreement giving the Americans responsibility for defense of all the Samoan islands. This group, together with Wallis, was now considered a tactical entity and a new Marine brigade was to be organized to occupy the western islands.

As an advance force of this new garrison, the 7th Defense Battalion was sent to Upolu on 28 March, and a small detachment was established on Savaii. In the States, the 1st Marine Division at New River, North Carolina, organized the 3d Marine Brigade on 21 March with Brigadier General Charles D. Barrett in command. Its principal units were the 7th Marines and the 1st Battalion, 11th Marines. The 7th's 3d Battalion and Battery C of 1/11 were detached on the 29th to move overland to the west coast for further transfer to Samoa as part of the garrison for Wallis. General Larsen meanwhile had been directed to organize the 8th Defense Battalion on Tutuila, as the major element of the Wallis garrison. To exercise overall authority, Headquarters Samoan Area Defense Force was established on Tutuila. Major General Charles F. B. Price, who was appointed to this command, arrived with his staff at Pago Pago on 28 April from the States. On 8 May the 3d Marine Brigade convoy arrived off Apia and General Barrett assumed military command of Western Samoa. At the end of the month, the 8th Defense Battalion (Reinforced) under Colonel Raphael Griffin moved into Wallis.

More than 10,000 Marine ground troops were stationed in the Samoan area by the beginning of June, and reinforcements arrived in a steady flow. Marine air was also well established. General Larsen's interest and pressure assured that Tutuila's airfield was ready for use on 17 March, two days before the advance echelon of MAG–13 arrived. The new air group, organized on 1 March at San Diego, was earmarked for Price's command. Initially the group commander, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas J. Walker, Jr., had only one tactical squadron, VMF–111, operating from Tutuila's airfield, but VMO–151, a scout-bomber squadron, joined in May with the arrival of the 3d Marine Brigade convoy. The amphibians of the Navy's VS–1–D14 squadron were also put under Walker's command and sent forward to operate from Upolu and Wallis while the airfields projected for those islands were rushed to completion by naval construction battalions.

Like the rest of the garrison forces in the South Pacific which were rushed out to plug a gaping hole in Allied defenses, General Price's defense force was never called upon to conduct the island defense for which it was organized. Samoa might

[9] CMC Serial 003A7842, 20Mar42, Defense of Western Samoa and Wallis Island.


SOUTH PACIFIC
SHOWING THE AREA OF AMERICAN BUILDUP IN EARLY 1942 MAP 3
160°
170°
180°
170°
160°
10°
20°
Tamana
Aronai
Nukumanu
Ontong Java
Roncador Reef
SOLOMON ISLANDS
Santa Isabel
Ndai
Stewart
Malaita
Guadalcanal
San Cristobal
Nupani
Duff
Ndeni
Rennell
Vanikoro
SANTA CRUZ ISLANDS
Torres
Vanua Lava
Gaua
Espiritu Santo
Aurora
Ambrym
Malekula
NEW HEBRIDES
Huon
Efate
Petrie Reef
Eromanga
Tanna
Renard
Sandy
Belep
Uea
Lifu
Mare
Noumea
New Caledonia
LOYALTY ISLANDS
Aneityum
Matthew
Hunter
Walpole
Nanomea
Niutao
Nanomana
Nui
ELLICE ISLANDS
Vaitupu
Nuku Fetau
Funafuti
Nuku Lailai
UNION GROUP
Atafu
Fakaofu
Nurakita
Rotuma
Wallis
SAMOA ISLANDS
Savaii
Upolu
Tutuila
Tafahi
Hoorn
Niuafou
FIJI ISLANDS
Vanua Levu
Viti Levu
EASTERN GROUP
Kandavu
Matuku
Vatao
Tuvana Itolo
Onoilau
Late
Fanua Lai
Vavau
TONGA ISLANDS
Haapai
Tongatabu
Ata
Conway Reef
Minerva Reefs

well have become a target for enemy attacks, but the decisive Battle of Midway forced the Japanese to curb their soaring ambition.[10] Samoa became a vast advanced combat training camp instead of a battleground. Most of the units coming there after the arrival of the 2d Brigade drew heavily on the recruit depots for their personnel,[11] and for these Marines Samoan duty was an opportunity for learning the fundamentals of teamwork in combat operations. As the need for defense construction was met and the danger of Japanese attacks lessened, Samoa became a staging area through which replacements and reinforcements were funnelled to the amphibious offensives in the Solomons.[12] Units and individuals paused for a while here and then moved on, more jungle-wise and combat ready, to meet the Japanese.

[10] *Campaigns of the Pacific War*, 3. See Part V, "Decision at Midway" and especially Chapter 1, "Setting the Stage—Early Naval Operations" for events leading up to the Midway battle.

[11] At least 40% of the 3d MarBrig initial complement was straight out of boot camp. 3d Mar Brig AnRept, 6Sept42, 9.

[12] From December 1942 to July 1943 Samoa was the training center for all Marine replacement battalions raised on the east coast of the U. S. K. W. Condit, G. Diamond, and E. T. Turnbladh, *Marine Corps Ground Training in World War II* (Washington: HistBr, G–3, HQMC, 1956), 181–186.

PART III

The Defense of Wake

Wake in the Shadow of War[1]

In the strategic context of 1940 and 1941, the importance of Wake, both to the United States and Japan, was considerable. At this time the United States had not won its ocean-girdling net of Pacific bases, and, with the exceptions of Wake, Midway, and Guam, the islands between the Hawaiians and the Philippines were *terra incognita*. Wake, a prying outpost north of the Marshalls and on the flank of the Marianas, would be a strategic prize for Japan's ocean interests and a corresponding embarrassment while it was in the hands of the United States.

These factors had been noted by the U. S. in the Hepburn Report of 1938 which recommended a $7,500,000 three-year program to develop the atoll as an advanced air base and an intermediate station on the air route to the Far East. Acting on these recommendations, initial development of Wake began early in 1941.[2] Base construction was given first priority, and by the time the first military contingent arrived on the atoll a civilian contractor's crew of approximately 1,200 men, under supervision of Mr. Daniel Teters, was hard at work.

By 18 April 1941, Admiral Husband E. Kimmel, Commander in Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet, became fearful that the defensive efforts had started too late. In a study sent to the Chief of Naval Operations, Kimmel stressed the importance of Wake and asked that work on defense be given a higher priority than base construction. He also requested that a Marine defense battalion be assigned to the atoll.[3]

In 1941 the strength of a typical defense battalion was 43 officers and 939 enlisted men, and its two most characteristic attributes were balanced structure and a high degree of strategic mobility. But mobility disappeared at the battalion's destination. Once its guns were in position, a defense battalion suffered from insufficient transportation and a shortage of men.[4]

The Pacific strategy of 1941 contemplated rendering our bases relatively secure against air raids, hit-and-run surface attacks, or even minor landings. Fleet Marine Force defense battalions, organized for defense against just such operations, could provide antiaircraft protection, could stand off light men-of-war and transports, and in extreme emergency could fight on the beaches with individual weapons in the tradition that every Ma-

[1] For a résumé of the previous history of Wake, see *Defense of Wake*, Appendix II, "Prewar History of Wake, 1586–1941." Col Heinl's monograph has been the principal source used in compiling this account; his version of the action has been followed closely.

[2] Capt R. A. Dierdorff, USN, "Pioneer Party—Wake Island," *USNI Proceedings*, April 1943, 502.

[3] CinCPac ltr to CNO, 18Apr41.

[4] USMC T/O's, D–133 through D–155–D inclusive, 27Feb41; MGC ltr, 28Aug41, "Employment of Defense Battalions."

rine, first and last, is an infantryman.[5] Within and about the structure of such lightly held but secure bases, the Pacific Fleet would ply, awaiting the moment when battle could be joined with enemy naval forces—"to get at naval forces with naval forces,"[6] as Admiral Kimmel put it—in decisive action for control of the sea.

As might be expected, the Japanese concept of strategy in the Central Pacific was to seize or neutralize the few advanced United States bases west of the Hawaiian Islands as quickly as possible after the outset of war. For this purpose Japanese forces in the Marshalls and Carolines (the *Fourth Fleet*) were organized along lines resembling an American amphibious force.[7] Commanded by Vice Admiral Nariyoshi Inouye, the *Fourth Fleet* was composed of amphibious shipping, a few old cruisers, destroyers, submarines, shore-based aircraft, and a Japanese version of our own Fleet Marine Force: the special naval landing force.[8] Fleet headquarters were at Truk, where Admiral Inouye's flag flew in the light cruiser *Kashima*.[9]

The war missions of Admiral Inouye and his fleet had been decided generally in 1938 when the basic East Asia war plans had been prepared in Tokyo.[10] But it was not until November 1941 that detailed instructions for commanders within the *Combined Fleet* were formulated and issued. In these instructions, Wake was dismissed in a single phrase:

> Forces of the Fourth Fleet:
> Defend the South Seas Islands, patrol, maintain surface communications, capture Wake . . . .[11]

Wake would be strictly a local operation. By Admiral Inouye's scheme, 450 special naval landing force troops could, in a pinch, turn the trick.[12]

FINAL PREPARATIONS, AUTUMN, 1941[13]

On 23 June 1941 the Chief of Naval Operations directed that elements of the 1st Defense Battalion, FMF, be established at Wake "as soon as practicable." This directive (as eventually modified)

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[5] *Ibid.*

[6] CinCPac ltr to CNO, 18Apr41, "Defense and Development of Wake Island."

[7] ATIS (SWPA) Doc No. 17895A, "Full translations of answers to questions concerning attack on Wake Island," hereinafter cited as *Wake Attack*.

[8] The special naval landing force (SNLF, sometimes contracted to SLF) were Japanese Navy personnel organized for service and duties in limited land operations similar to those performed by U. S. Marines. Throughout the war, they gave an outstanding account of themselves.

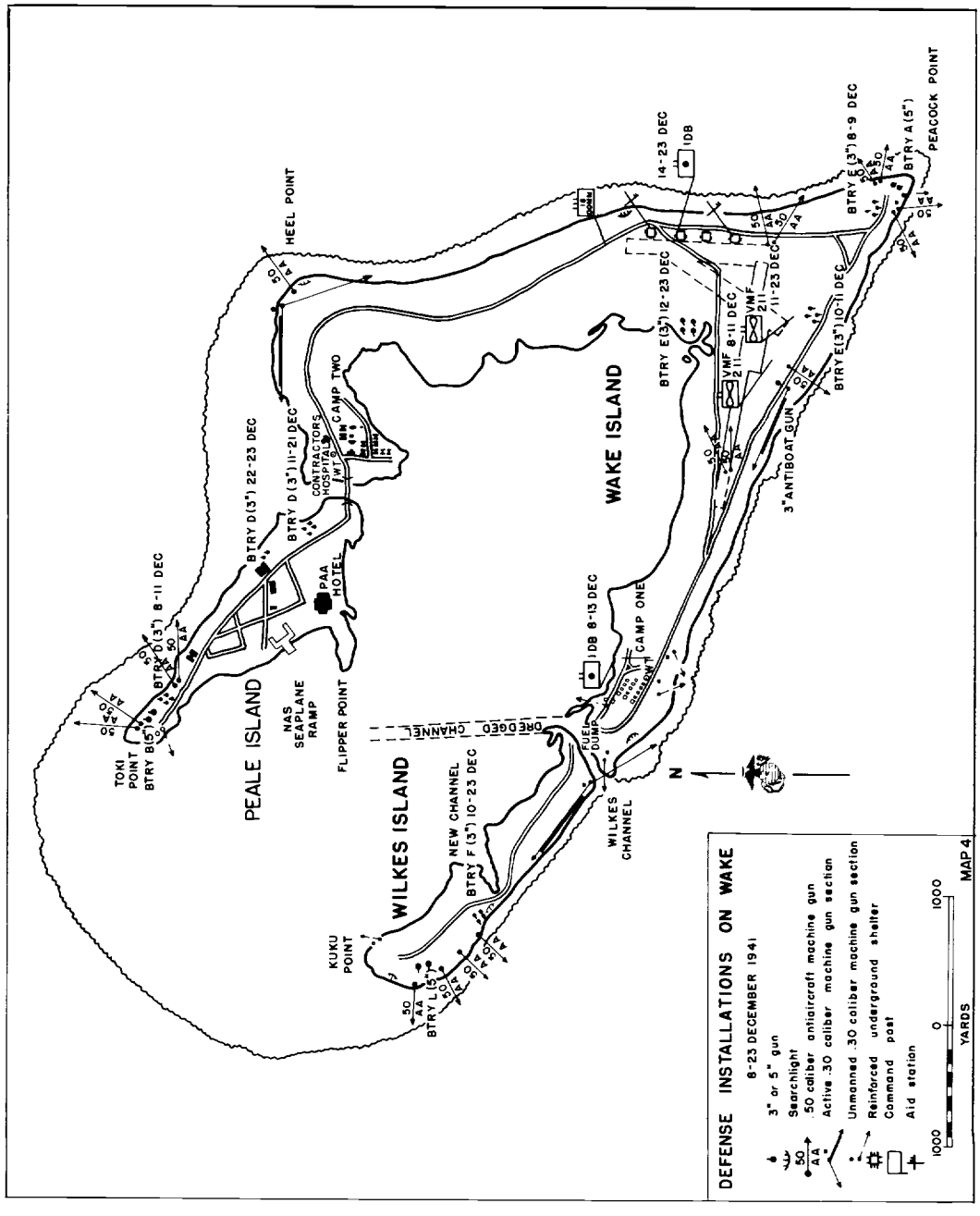
[9] *Wake Attack.*

[10] USSBS(Pac), NavAnalysisDiv, *Interrogations of Japanese Officials*, 2 vols (Washington: GPO, 1946), "Japanese Naval Planning," I, 176, hereinafter cited as *USSBS Interrogations* with subject or interviewee.

[11] *Campaigns of the Pacific War*, 47.

[12] *USSBS Interrogations*, "Japanese Capture of Wake Island," II, 371, hereinafter cited as *Capture of Wake.*

[13] Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from CO 1st DefBnDet Wake, Rept to CMC, 18Mar46, hereinafter cited as *Devereux Rept;* Col P. A. Putnam Rept to CMC, 18Oct45, hereinafter cited as *Putnam Rept;* informal reports by key subordinates to Cols Devereux and Putnam on which the official reports are largely based, hereinafter cited as (*officer's name*) Rept; ships' logs of the U. S. naval vessels concerned; Col J. P. S. Devereux, *The Story of Wake Island* (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott Company, 1947), hereinafter cited as *Devereux Story.*


PEALE ISLAND
WILKES ISLAND
WAKE ISLAND
TOKI POINT
BTRY B(5")
NAS SEAPLANE RAMP
FLIPPER POINT
PAA HOTEL
CONTRACTORS HOSPITAL
CAMP TWO
HEEL POINT
BTRY D(3") 22-23 DEC
BTRY D(3") 11-21 DEC
BTRY D(3") 8-11 DEC
ORE DOCK CHANNEL
NEW CHANNEL
BTRY F(3") 10-23 DEC
KUKU POINT
BTRY L(5")
WILKES CHANNEL
FUEL DUMP
1DB 8-15 DEC
CAMP ONE
1DB 14-23 DEC
BTRY E(3") 12-23 DEC
VMF 211 8-11 DEC
VMF 211 11-23 DEC
BTRY E(3") 10-11 DEC
3" ANTIBOAT GUN
BTRY G(3") 8-9 DEC
BTRY A(5")
PEACOCK POINT
N
DEFENSE INSTALLATIONS ON WAKE
8-23 DECEMBER 1941
3" or 5" gun
Searchlight
50 caliber antiaircraft machine gun
Active .30 caliber machine gun section
Unmanned .30 caliber machine gun section
Reinforced underground shelter
Command post
Aid station
1000 0 1000
YARDS
MAP 4

specified that the following units should compose the defensive garrison:

Four 3-inch antiaircraft batteries
Three 5-inch seacoast batteries
Appropriate automatic weapons
One SCR–268 fire-control radar, and one SCR-270B search radar.[14]

CNO's "as soon as practicable" was translated into immediate action by the Pacific Fleet. About 1 August Major Lewis A. Hohn with five officers and 173 enlisted Marines and sailors from the 1st Defense Battalion commenced loading the USS *Regulus*, a twenty-year-old "Hog Island" transport which would carry the battalion advance detail to Wake. *Regulus* sailed on 8 August, and arrived off Wake on 19 August. Weapons and camp equipment were lightered ashore, and by the time the *Regulus* departed on 22 August, a camp facing the lagoon had been set up on a site near the west end of Wake's west leg. To distinguish this camp from the one west of Heel Point housing the 1,200 Pacific Naval Air Base contract workmen, the Marine camp was designated as Camp One. The civilian establishment became known as Camp Two. (See Map 4)

Wake, as it appeared to the Marines of the 1st Defense Battalion, was a V–shaped atoll composed of three islands: Wake Island proper,[15] the body of the V; and Wilkes and Peale, the two tip-ends. Its land mass consisted of some 2,600 acres of sand and coral. Offshore, heavy surf roared continually against a coral reef which surrounded the whole atoll at distances varying from 30 to 1,000 yards. The beaches and much of the terrain inland were covered with coral boulders, some large enough to conceal several men. The interior lagoon, although affording sufficient surface and depth for seaplanes, was studded with coral heads and foul ground which had to be dredged before ships could enter the single channel between Wilkes and Wake Island. Despite Wake's limited land area, its coastline exceeded 21 miles. An excellent vignette of Wake in 1941 was given by Colonel Bayler:

> Wake is by no means the bare sandy spit one thinks of when atolls are mentioned. Considerable areas of it are covered by woods, and though the trees are small, their thick foliage and the scrubby tangled underbrush provided admirable cover . . . Walking in these jungles was difficult but not impossible . . .[16]

In August 1941, Wake was in rapid transition from its past solitude to the mechanized modernity of an outlying air base. Patrol plane facilities and a concrete ramp, the result of Pan American's pioneering, were already available on Peale.[17] Just inshore of Peacock Point along the west leg of Wake Island a narrow airstrip, 5,000 by 200 feet, had been chopped out of the dense growth. A main roadnet of packed coral was taking shape rapidly as the contractor's work-

[14] CNO ltr to CinCPac, 23Jun41, "Establishment of defensive garrison on Wake Island."

[15] To prevent confusion, Wake Island, as distinguished from the entire atoll, will hereinafter be entitled "Wake Island," whereas the single word, "Wake" will designate the atoll.

[16] LtCol W. L. J. Bayler, *Last Man off Wake Island* (Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill, 1943), 62, hereinafter cited as *Last Man off Wake Island*.

[17] In 1935, with Navy cooperation, Pan American Airways began development of a staging and refueling base on Peale to service its big clippers on the run to the Orient. At the time of this narrative major facilities included, in addition to those mentioned above, a powerful radio station, a pier, and a small but excellent hotel for overnight accommodation of passengers. Dierdorff, *op. cit.*, 501.

men blasted, slashed, and dozed the terrain of Wake.

In spite of the need for haste, rigid official separation existed between the construction efforts of Marines and those of the contractors.[18] Operating on a semi-private basis with their heavy equipment, supplies, and facilities the naval air base contract workers were concerned with building roads, shops, utilities, quarters, air base facilities, and the like. They built no defense installations. This construction fell solely to the Marines who had little engineering equipment except picks and shovels or the infrequent luxury of a borrowed civilian bulldozer. The Marines installed their heavy weapons by hand, hewed emplacements and foxholes from the coral, and erected their own living quarters. Understanding this basic difference in available means, the Navy's construction representative, Lieutenant Commander Elmer B. Greey,[19] and the civilian general superintendent, Mr. Daniel Teters, did their best to assist the shorthanded and meagerly equipped Marines. At no time, even after the outbreak of war, did the contractor's establishment or workmen come under full military control.

On 15 October Major Hohn was relieved as Marine detachment commander by Major James P. S. Devereux, who until this time had been executive officer of the 1st Defense Battalion. Major Devereux also became Island Commander, an additional duty which he would hold until relieved late in 1941 by a naval officer, Commander W. S. Cunningham, at this time still navigator of the USS Wright.

Major Devereux, as he saw Wake at this time, describes it as follows :

> When I arrived on the island, the contractor's men working on the airfield near the toe of Wake proper had one airstrip in usable condition and were beginning the cross-runway. Five large magazines and three smaller detonator magazines, built of concrete and partly underground, were almost completed in the airfield area. A Marine barracks, quarters for the Navy fliers who would be stationed on the island, warehouses and shops also were going up on Wake. On Peale Island, work was progressing on a naval hospital, the seaplane ramp and parking areas. On Wilkes, there were only fuel storage tanks and the sites of proposed powder magazines, but a new deepwater channel was being cut through the island. In the lagoon, a dredge was removing coral heads from the runways for the seaplanes which were to be based at Wake. Some of these installations were nearly finished ; some were partly completed ; some were only in the blueprint stage.[20]

To bring Wake's defenses to the highest possible state of readiness in the shortest time, Major Devereux found much to be done. In addition, as senior representative of the armed forces on Wake, he was confronted by other demanding problems. To reinforce Army air strength in the Philippines, B-17 "Flying Fortresses" were being staged across the Pacific [21] through Wake, but no aviation ground crews were available there to service the big airplanes. Some 3,000 gallons of gasoline for each of these planes therefore had to be manhandled and hand-pumped

[18] Capt W. S. Cunningham, USN, transcript of recorded interview, "History of Wake Island Defense," 9Jan46, 3, hereinafter cited as *Cunningham Interview*.

[19] "Resident Officer-in-Charge" was LCdr Greey's official designation. With four enlisted Navy radiomen to maintain his communications, he was, until the arrival of Maj Hohn's detachment, sole naval representative on Wake.

[20] *Devereux Story, 25.*

[21] *War Reports, 67.*

by the Marines.[22] This they did in addition to their normal duties, and the fueling tasks came at all hours of the day or night. It was ironic that many of these aircraft, which cost Wake so many man-hours of vital defensive preparations, would be trapped on the ground by the initial Japanese attacks on Clark and Nichols Fields in the Philippines.

Although this servicing of Army planes represented the heaviest single additional duty imposed upon the Marines, they were also required to act as stevedores in the time-consuming and exhausting process of unloading ships which arrived at the atoll. This work was required until the channel, berthing and turning facilities inside the lagoon could be completed. These additional duties hampered defense work during the autumn of 1941; but fortunately the detachment needed little combat training because it contained a number of "old Marines" of the best type.[23] On 2 November, two weeks after Major Devereux's arrival, the Wake garrison was augmented by a draft from the parent 1st Defense Battalion. This group included 9 officers and 200 enlisted men who arrived from Pearl on board the USS *Castor*. This brought the total Marine strength on Wake to 15 officers and 373 enlisted Marines.

During October and November progress on and about the airstrip, by now a going concern, indicated that there was room on Wake for the aviation component of fighters necessary to balance and round out the defense force. Commander, Aircraft Battle Force, had determined that this was to be Marine Fighter Squadron 211, supported in its independent role by a provisional service detachment drawn from Marine Air Group 21, to which VMF–211 was assigned. To establish the ground facilities required to maintain this squadron, Major Walter L. J. Bayler from the staff of MAG–21, together with a detachment of 49 Marines commanded by Second Lieutenant Robert J. Conderman,[24] were dispatched from Pearl on 19 November in USS *Wright*, an aircraft tender which was also bringing out the prospective Island Commander and commanding officer of the Naval Air Station.

While the *Wright* plowed westward bearing VMF–211's ground components, the air echelon of that squadron, consisting of the squadron commander, nine officers and two enlisted pilots,[25] had on the

[22] Tankers would pump bulk aviation gas into tank storage ashore: Marine working parties would pump this gasoline into 50-gallon drums and transfer the drums to dispersed fuel dumps; finally, on arrival of planes the same gasoline would again be pumped by the same means into a lone tank-truck for delivery to the aircraft. When time pressed—as it usually did—Marines reinforced the truck by pumping directly from 50-gallon drums into the Fortresses.

[23] *Devereux Story*, 27.

[24] This detachment, like a similar one organized for the Marine air component at Midway, had been provisionally made up from key personnel representing each squadron in MAG–21, inasmuch as, at the time of organization, firm decision had not been made as to which squadrons from that group would be assigned to which islands. Wake aviation's ground detachment, therefore, included personnel not only from VMF–211 but from H&S Sq–21 and VMSB–231 and –232. CO MAG–21 Rept to CMC, 23Dec41.

[25] The pilots of VMF–211's Wake detachment were: Maj Paul A. Putnam (commanding), Capts Henry T. Elrod, Herbert C. Frueler, Frank C. Tharin; 1stLt George A. Graves; 2dLts Robert J. Conderman (in command of advance detail and ground maintenance, but also a pilot), Carl R. Davidson, Frank J. Holden, John

afternoon of 27 November received secret verbal warning orders to prepare for embarkation on board a carrier. Such orders had been expected by the squadron commander (though not by the pilots, virtually all of whom carried little more than toilet articles and a change of clothing), and few preparations were required. The squadron had only to fly the 12 new F4F–3 (Grumman Wildcat) fighters from Ewa Mooring Mast (as that air station was then designated) over to Ford Island, the naval air base in the middle of Pearl Harbor, for further transfer by air to the flight deck of the USS *Enterprise*. This was a routine operation for Marine pilots, and except for their unfamiliarity with the new aircraft, and the fact that one plane's starter misbehaved,[26] the morning flight of 28 November onto the *Enterprise* went off without incident.[27]

The best description of VMF–211's voyage to Wake is contained in a personal letter, composed on the eve of the squadron's debarkation, from Major Paul A. Putnam to Colonel Claude A. Larkin who commanded MAG–21. Excerpts are quoted:

AT SEA,
December 3, 1941.

DEAR COLONEL LARKIN:

It is expected that we will go ashore tomorrow morning. The extreme secrecy under which we sailed is still in effect and I understand is to remain so at least until this Force has returned to Hawaiian operating area. Therefore I am sending this first report via guard mail on this ship, rather than by air mail after landing . . .

You will recall that I left one plane at Ford Island. The Admiral at once gave me a plane to replace it, from VF–6; and he made it plain to me and to the whole ship that nothing should be overlooked nor any trouble spared in order to insure that I will get ashore with 12 airplanes in as near perfect condition as possible. Immediately I was given a full complement of mechs and all hands aboard have continually vied with each other to see who could do the most for me. I feel a bit like the fatted calf being groomed for whatever it is that happens to fatted calves, but it surely is nice while it lasts and the airplanes are pretty sleek and fat too. They have of course been checked and double checked from end to end, and they have also been painted so that all 12 are now of standard blue and gray . . .

The Admiral seems to be most determined to maintain secrecy regarding the position and activity of this Force. There has been a continuous inner air patrol during daylight, and a full squadron has made a long search to the front and flanks each morning and evening. They are armed to the teeth and the orders are to attack any Japanese vessel or aircraft on sight in order to prevent the discovery of this Force.

My orders, however, are not so direct. In fact I have no orders. I have been told informally by lesser members of Staff that I will be given orders only to fly off the ship and go to the land, and that there will be nothing in the way of instructions other than to do what seems appropriate at the moment. Of course I shall go and ask for orders and instructions, but it seems unlikely that I shall be given anything definite . .

This is written Wednesday forenoon. Should I receive any orders at variance with the foregoing, I will add a postscript. Otherwise I think of nothing further of importance or interest at this time. . . .

When the *Enterprise* had reached a point approximately 200 miles northeast of Wake, the squadron, from a materiel standpoint, was "as far as possible ready

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F. Kinney, David D. Kliewer, Henry G. Webb; TSgt William J. Hamilton, and SSgt Robert O. Arthur.

[26] A hint as to the importance of the squadron's mission might have been drawn at this time from the fact that, when this starter trouble developed, the pilot of this defective plane was flown by a torpedo plane to the carrier where a brand-new F4F–3 from an *Enterprise* squadron was issued to him.

[27] Maj. P. A. Putnam ltr to CO MAG–21, 3Dec41.

for combat service," according to Major Putnam. However, he added, it was:

> . . . seriously handicapped by lack of experience in the type of airplane then used. It is believed that the squadron was excellently trained and well qualified for war duty in a general sense, but it was unfortunate that the new type of airplane, so radically different from the type in which training had been conducted, had been received too recently to permit familiarization in tactical flying and gunnery.[28]

On the morning of 4 December this force was met by a Navy PBY sent out from Wake,[29] and the VMF–211 aircraft took off from the *Enterprise* and followed this plane to the atoll. Within less than two hours the last F4F–3 had pancaked on the narrow strip at Peacock Point.

Major Bayler had arrived on 29 November and already was busy setting up airbase communication facilities. Commander Cunningham had succeeded Major Devereux as Island Commander, and Lieutenant Conderman and his 49 headquarters and service personnel were waiting to greet the squadron, but the aircraft operating facilities at Wake were hardly in a finished stage. The landing strip, although sufficient in length, was too narrow to permit safe operation of more than one airplane at a time. Takeoffs or landings by section were thus impossible. Parking was extremely restricted, and all areas about the hardstand mat were in such rough and unfinished condition that passage of airplanes over them, even when pushed by hand, could cause serious plane damage. Fueling still depended on hand pumps and man power. No shelters or aircraft revetments existed, and the new planes were somewhat puzzling to pilots and mechanics who had no instruction manuals. Major Putnam began immediately to negotiate for the construction of revetments,[30] and he also began a training program to be carried on in conjunction with the daily dawn and dusk patrols which started on the morning after VMF–211 arrived.

These patrols, executed by four aircraft, circled the atoll approximately 50 miles out, and pilots combined this duty with navigation and instrument training. Instrument practice was particularly important because Wake had no electronic homing or navigational aids suitable for fighter operations, and the atoll was a small mark for pilots to locate through a floor of intermittent clouds.[31]

Other changes had taken place since the arrival of the *Wright*. Commander

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[28] *Putnam Rept*, 13.

[29] On the day before, to the surprise of the men on Wake, a 12-plane squadron of PBY's had glided down onto the lagoon, anchored, and commenced a daily series of long-range air searches to the south of Wake. These seaplanes, however, were recalled from Wake on 5 December. The PBY which assisted VMF–211 with its navigation was from this squadron. *Last man off Wake Island*, 29.

[30] "Backed by a written request from the Commander, Aircraft Battle Force, a request was made through the Island Commander to the Civilian Contractor's superintendent on the morning of 5 December, asking for the immediate construction of bunkers for the protection of aircraft, and outlining various other works to follow. Great emphasis was put on the fact that speed, rather than neatly finished work, was required. However, an inspection that afternoon revealed a young civil engineer laboriously setting out stakes with a transit and three rodmen. It required an hour of frantic rushing about and some very strong language to replace the young engineer and his rodmen with a couple of Swedes and bulldozers." *Putnam Rpt*, 6.

[31] HistSec, HQMC interview with 1stLt J. F. Kinney, 23Jul45, 4, hereinafter cited as *Kinney Interview*.

Cunningham had brought with him Commander Campbell Keene, eight Navy officers, and 58 bluejackets who comprised the initial detachment of the Naval Air Station. All these personnel, like the Army Air Force communication detachment [32] of one officer and four soldiers, were without arms or field equipment. In spite of the efforts, men, and equipment consigned to Wake, the situation was still grim on 6 December 1941. The ground defenses, embodying the complete artillery of a defense battalion, had been emplaced during 12-hour working days, and some protective sandbagging and camouflage accomplished. But to man these weapons the 1st Defense Battalion detachment had only 15 officers and 373 enlisted men, although the 1941 T/O called for 43 officers and 939 men. This meant that one 3-inch antiaircraft battery [33] was entirely without personnel, and that each of the other two batteries could man only three of its four guns. Thus only six of the twelve 3-inch guns on the island could be utilized. Only Battery D had its full allowance of fire-control equipment. Battery E had a director but no height finder, and it had to get altitude data by telephone from Battery D. There were not half enough men to employ the ground and antiaircraft machine guns. There was no radar, despite plans for its eventual provision, and the searchlight battery did not have sound locators with which to detect approaching aircraft. Only the crews of the 5-inch seacoast batteries were at or near authorized strengths, and they also were devilled by unending minor shortages of tools, spare parts, and miscellaneous ordnance items.[34]

Peale Island's base development and defensive organization were the most advanced in the atoll. Although Battery B, the 5-inch seacoast unit at Toki Point, had been fully organized only after the arrival of personnel on 2 November, its position was in good shape. Much the same could be said of Battery D, 3-inch antiaircraft, set up near the southeast end of the island. All emplacements had not been completely sandbagged, but there were adequate personnel shelters plus underground stowage for 1,400 rounds of 3-inch ammunition. Telephone lines, although not buried, linked all positions with the island command post. Work on Wake Island was not far behind. Battery A, the 5-inch seacoast unit at Peacock Point, was completely emplaced and well camouflaged although it lacked individual shelters. Battery E, (3-inch antiaircraft), although working with only 43 Marines, had completely emplaced, sandbagged and camouflaged two guns and the director, and work on the third gun was nearly completed by 6 December. Telephone lines (with important trunks doubled or tripled) connected all units on Wake Island, but the wire was on the surface.

"Wilkes Island was the least developed," reported Captain Wesley McC. Platt, the local commander:

> . . . At the outbreak of war, weapons . . . had been set up. All were without camouflage or protection except the .50 caliber machine

[32] Commanded by Capt Henry S. Wilson, USA. This detachment manned an Army Airways Communication Service radio van to assist B-17's en route westward.

[33] This was Btry F. For this battery, however, the necessary fire control equipment had not yet arrived; so, even with full gun crews, its effectiveness would have been slight.

[34] File, dispatches received from Wake, 7–23 Dec41, hereinafter cited as *Wake File.*

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guns, which had been emplaced. All brush east of the new channel had been cleared. The remaining brush west of the new channel was thick and . . . as a result of . . . this [the] . . . .50 caliber machine guns had been placed fairly close to the water line. The beach itself dropped abruptly from 2½ to 4 feet just above the high water mark.[35]

In addition to four .50 caliber AA and four .30 caliber machine guns, Platt had two searchlights and one 5-inch seacoast battery (L) which was set up at Kuku Point. The four 3-inch guns destined for Battery F were parked on Wilkes without personnel or fire control gear. Wire communications were in between the island command post and all units.[36]

Wake, intended primarily as a patrol plane base for PBY's, "the eyes of the Fleet," had no scouting aircraft after the PBY's departed on 5 December, and only the most primitive facilities for any type of aircraft operations. Its defending fighter squadron was learning while working, and these planes had neither armor nor self-sealing fuel tanks. In addition, their naval type bomb racks did not match the local supply of bombs.[37]

Exclusive of the 1,200 civilian contract employees, the military population of Wake (almost twenty per cent of whom were without arms or equipment) totalled 38 officers and 485 enlisted men:[38]

1st Defense Battalion detachment:	15 officers, 373 enlisted
VMF–211 and attachments:	12 officers, 49 enlisted
U. S. Naval Air Station:	10 officers, 58 enlisted (without arms).
Army Air Corps:	1 officer, 4 enlisted (without arms).
USS *Triton*:	1 enlisted (without arms, landed for medical attention).

Thus there were only 449 Marines on the atoll who were equipped and trained for combat.

Supplies on Wake, although aggravatingly short in many particular items, were generally adequate. The Marines had a 90-day supply of rations, and the civilian workers had a six-month supply. No natural water supply existed, but a sufficient number of evaporators were in service. Ammunition and aviation ordnance supplies initially could support limited operations, but would not withstand a protracted defense. Medical supplies were those normal for a remote, outlying station and could thus be considered adequate.[39] In addition to the naval medical equipment and personnel on Wake, the contractor's organization operated a fully-equipped hospital in Camp Two.[40]

But since November, when dispatches had warned that the international situation demanded alertness, the atoll was as ready for defense as time and material available permitted. When this warning arrived, Major Devereux, then the island commander, asked whether the civilian workers should be turned to tasks dealing more directly with military defense, but he was told not to revise work priorities. Small-arms ammunition was nevertheless

[35] LtCol W. McC. Platt reply to HistSec, HQMC questionnaire, 10Mar47.

[36] *Ibid.*, 2.

[37] Capt Frueler, squadron ordnance officer, at this moment was devising homemade modifications of the troublesome bomb lugs. By 8 December two 100-pound bombs could be precariously swung onto each aircraft, though hardly in any manner to inspire pilot confidence in clean release or assurance that return to base could be accomplished without dangling armed bombs.

[38] *Devereux Rept.*

[39] Maj. W. L. J. *Bayler Rept*, 9–10.

[40] *Cunningham Interview*, 3.

issued to individual Marines, and ready-service ammunition was stowed at every gun position. A common "J"-line (so-called) which augmented normal telephone circuits, joined all batteries, command posts, observation posts, and other installations with which the commander might need contact during battle,[41] and primitive "walky-talkies" formed a radio net established to parallel wire communications between command posts on Wake Island, Wilkes, and Peale. Atop the 50-foot steel water tank at Camp One, the highest point on Wake, Major Devereux had established a visual observation post linked by field telephone to the command post. This OP, with a seaward horizon of about nine miles, was the only substitute for radar.

[41] Maj W. L. J. *Bayler Rept*, 3.

On the morning of Saturday, 6 December, Major Devereux found time to hold the first general quarters drill for the entire defense battalion. "Call to Arms" was sounded, and all gun positions were manned (to the extent which personnel shortages permitted), communications tested, and simulated targets were "engaged."[42] The drill ran smoothly, and Major Devereux granted his men an almost unheard-of reward: Saturday afternoon off, and holiday routine for Sunday.

His timing of this "breather" was better than he knew.

[42] Prior to the outbreak of war, no opportunity had been found for test firings, calibration, or other gunnery exercises after emplacement of weapons on Wake. The first actual firing was in combat against the Japanese. *Cunningham Interview* 3.

The Enemy Strikes[1]

The Pan American Airways *Philippine Clipper* which had spent the night of 7–8 December at Wake re-embarked passengers shortly after sunrise on Monday[2] 8 December, taxied into the calm lagoon, and soared toward Guam. Ashore breakfast was nearly over, and some Marines were squaring away their tents prior to falling out for the day's work. Major Devereux was shaving. In the Army Airways Communications Service radio van near the airstrip, an operator was coming up on frequency with Hickam Field on Oahu when at 0650 a frantic uncoded transmission cut through: Oahu was under enemy air attack.

Captain Henry S. Wilson snatched the message and rushed to Devereux's tent. The major tried unsuccessfully to reach Commander Cunningham by telephone, and then called the base communication shack. There, a coded priority[3] transmission from Pearl was being broken down. Devereux put down the telephone and ordered the field music to sound "Call to Arms."[4] Gunnery sergeants broke out their men and made sure that all had their ammunition. The Marines then piled into trucks which rushed them to the battery areas. By 0735 all positions were manned and ready, the planned watch was established atop the water tank in Camp One, and defense battalion officers had held a brief conference.

The dawn air patrol was up before the news came from Pearl,[5] but aviation personnel took hurried steps to safeguard the new Wildcats still on the ground. The *Philippine Clipper* was recalled ten minutes after its takeoff, and it circled back down to the lagoon. But in spite of these measures, things were not running smoothly at the airstrip. VMF–211 had been on Wake only four days and could hardly call itself well established. Aircraft revetments still being dozed would not be ready until 1400 that day, and suitable access roads to these revetments likewise were unfinished. Existing parking areas restricted plane dispersal to hazardously narrow limits. As Major Putnam stated it:

> The Squadron Commander was faced with a choice between two major decisions, and inevitably he chose the wrong one. Work was

[1] Unless otherwise noted, the material in chap 2 is derived from *Devereux Rept; Putnam Rept; (officer's name) Repts; Bayler Rept; Devereux Story.*

[2] By east longitude date; this was the same as Sunday, 7 December east of the date line.

[3] At this time relative priorities in dispatch traffic were as follows: Urgent (to be used only for initial enemy contact reports), Priority, Routine, Deferred. Thus a priority dispatch presented a considerably more important transmission than it now would.

[4] Cdr Cunningham, who immediately recalled the *Philippine Clipper*, has since stated that it was he who ordered the defense battalion to general quarters, but it appears that this action had already been taken prior to his issuance of any order. *Cunningham Interview*, 4.

[5] *Kinney Interview*, 3.

progressing simultaneously on six of the protective bunkers for the airplanes, and while none was available for immediate occupancy, all would be ready not later than 1400. Protection and camouflage for facilities were not available but could be made ready within 24 hours. Foxholes or other prepared positions for personnel did not exist but would be completed not later than 1400. To move the airplanes out of the regular parking area entailed grave risk of damage, and any damage meant the complete loss of an airplane because of the complete absence of spare parts . . . The Squadron Commander decided to avoid certain damage to his airplanes by moving them across the rough ground, to delay movements of material until some place could be prepared to receive it, and to trust his personnel to take natural cover if attacked.[6]

Thus VMF–211's handful of pilots and mechanics spent the morning dispersing aircraft as widely as possible in the usable parking area, relocating the squadron radio installation from its temporary site to a covered one, and arming and servicing all aircraft for combat.

At 0800, only a few hours after the blazing and dying *Arizona* had broken out her colors under enemy fire at Pearl Harbor, Morning Colors sounded on Wake. Defensive preparations hummed. Trucks delivered full allowances of ammunition to each unit, the few spare individual weapons in Marine storerooms were spread as far as they would go to the unarmed Air Corps soldiers and Naval bluejackets, and gas masks and helmets of World War I vintage were distributed to the battery positions. Watches were set at fire control instruments and guns, while the balance of personnel worked on foxholes and filled the few remaining sandbags. The 3-inch antiaircraft batteries were specifically directed to keep one gun, plus all fire control instruments, fully manned. Marine units and the Island Commander hastily set up command posts. Commander Cunningham located his CP in Camp Two, and VMF–211's remained in the squadron office tent. Aviation personnel had to stick with their jobs of belting extra ammunition and transferring bulk fuel into more dispersable drums.

At 0900 the four-plane combat air patrol returned to base. The planes were refueled while the four pilots [7] took a smoking break, and then clambered back into F4F's 9 through 12 and took off again to scout the most likely sectors for enemy approach. Shortly after this the pilot of the *Philippine Clipper*, Captain J. H. Hamilton, reported for duty to Major Putnam at VMF–211's headquarters. He had orders from the Island Commander to make a long-range southward search with fighter escort. These orders, however, were later cancelled.[8]

While VMF–211's combat air patrol made a swing north of Wake at 12,000 feet, 36 twin-engined Japanese bombers were flying northward toward the atoll. This was *Air Attack Force No. 1* of the *Twenty-Fourth Air Flotilla*, based at Roi, 720 miles to the south.[9] As the enemy group leader signalled for a gliding let-

[6] *Putnam Rept*, 8.

[7] There were: Capt Elrod, who had relieved Maj Putnam on station, and 2dLt Davidson in one section, and 1stLt Kinney and TSgt Hamilton in the other.

[8] Orders were changed and the clipper took off for Midway at 1250 that afternoon to evacuate certain PAA personnel plus all passengers. Mr. H. P. Hevenor, a government official who missed the plane, was marooned on Wake and eventually ended up in Japanese hands. "It struck me as a rather drastic lesson in the wisdom of punctuality," commented Col Devereux. *Devereux Story*, 58.

[9] Notes on Enemy Interviews, n. d., hereinafter cited as *Enemy Notes*.

down in his 10,000-foot approach, he noted that the south coast of the atoll was masked by a drifting rain squall at about 2,000 feet. The three Japanese divisions, in 12-plane Vs, dropped rapidly down into the squall and emerged a few seconds later almost on top of the Wake airstrip. First Lieutenant William W. Lewis, commanding Battery E at Peacock Point, saw these planes at 1150, and he grabbed a "J"-line telephone to warn Devereux. Just as the major answered, a spray of bright sparks began to sail through the air ahead of the enemy formation. One civilian thought "the wheels dropped off the airplanes." But the planes had not come to lose their wheels. Japanese bombs were falling on Wake.

Lewis, an experienced antiaircraft artilleryman, had not only complied with the commanding officer's directive to keep one gun manned, but had added another for good measure. Within a matter of seconds he had two of Battery E's 3-inch guns firing at the Japanese,[10] and .50 caliber guns along the south shore of Wake quickly took up the fire. A tight pattern of 100-pound fragmentation bombs and 20mm incendiary bullets struck the entire VMF–211 area where eight Grummans were dispersed at approximately hundred-yard intervals. While two 12-plane enemy divisions continued to release bombs and to strafe Camp Two, one division broke off, and swung back over Camp One and the airstrip. For a second time within less than ten minutes the airstrip was bombed and strafed. By 1210 the strike was over. The enemy planes turned away and commenced their climb to cruising altitude. "The pilots in every one of the planes were grinning widely. Everyone waggled his wings to signify '*Banzai*'." [11]

The enemy attack burned or blasted seven of the eight F4F–3's from propeller to rudder, and the remaining Wildcat sustained serious but not irreparable damage to its reserve fuel tank. A direct bomb hit destroyed Major Bayler's air-ground radio installation, and the whole aviation area flamed in the blaze from the 25,000-gallon avgas tank which had been hit in the first strike. Fifty-gallon fuel drums burst into flame. VMF–211's tentage, containing the squadron's scanty stock of tools and spares, had been riddled and partially burned. Worst of all, 23 of the 55 aviation personnel then on the ground were killed outright or wounded so severely that they died before the following morning, eleven more were wounded but survived. At one stroke, VMF–211 had sustained nearly 60 per cent casualties. Nearly 50 per cent of the ground crewmen were dead. Three pilots (Lieutenants George A. Graves, Robert J. Conderman, and Frank J. Holden) were killed, and another, Lieutenant Henry G. Webb, was seriously wounded. Three more pilots, Major Putnam, Captain Frank C. Tharin, and Staff Sergeant Robert O. Arthur, had received minor wounds but remained on duty. In Camp

[10] Battery E, it will be recalled, had no height finder but was supposed to rely for this data on telephonic information from Battery D on Peale. Without waiting for word from Peale, Lt Lewis made a quick estimate of target altitude, cranked it onto his director, and had the battery in action within a matter of seconds.

[11] Account by Norio Tsuji, a Japanese observer during the raid. ATIS (SWPA), Enemy Publications No. 6, "Hawaii-Malaya Naval Operations," 27Mar43, 27–38, hereinafter cited as *Hawaii-Malaya NavOps*.

Two and the adjacent Pan American area, the hotel and other seaplane facilities were afire, the *Philippine Clipper* had received a few stray machine-gun bullets, and some ten civilian employees of PAA had been killed.[12] The enemy did not lose a single bomber although "several" were damaged by antiaircraft fire.[13] The Marine combat air patrol, well above the raid and momentarily scouting to the north, had not made contact. These pilots returned for landing shortly after the attack, and by a final stroke of ill fortune Captain Henry T. Elrod damaged his propeller seriously on a mass of bomb debris.

Wake's defenders were most concerned that this first raid had struck almost before they knew that enemy planes were overhead. The rain squall had helped the Japanese, but the atoll's lack of early-warning equipment was almost as beneficial to the enemy. The garrison needed radar, but none was available. Throughout the siege the Japanese planes continued to elude the most vigilant visual observation, and with the sound of their engines drowned by the booming surf they would often have their bombs away before they were spotted.

Damage control began at the airstrip as soon as the enemy departed. Casualties went to the one-story contractor's hospital which had been taken over as the island aid station,[14] the dead were placed in a reefer box at Camp Two, and able-bodied aviation personnel turned their attention to the airplanes and to the gasoline fires. The three planes still able to fly were sent up on combat air patrol. In the sky they would be safe from another surprise raid. Crews and officers reorganized and reallocated jobs. Second Lieutenant John F. Kinney became engineering officer to replace First Lieutenant Graves who had been killed.[15] Kinney's principal assistant was Technical Sergeant William J. Hamilton, an enlisted pilot, and these two men began salvaging tools and parts from burned planes. Their efforts immeasurably aided future operations of VMF–211. Captain Herbert C. Freuler reorganized the ordnance section, Lieutenant David D. Kliewer took over the radio section, and Captains Elrod and Tharin supervised construction of individual foxholes, shelters, and infantry defensive works in the VMF–211 area. Other work included mining the airstrip at 150-foot intervals with heavy dynamite charges to guard against airborne landings. Furrows were bulldozed throughout the open ground where such landings might take place, and heavy engineering equipment was placed to obstruct the runway at all times when friendly planes were not aloft. Plans called for continuation of the dawn and dusk reconnaissance flights, and for the initiation of a noon combat air patrol as well. It was hoped that these patrols could intercept subsequent enemy raids.

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[12] *Cunningham Interview*, 5.

[13] JICPOA Item No 4986, Professional notebook of Ens T. Nakamura, IJN, 1941–1943, 25Feb44, hereinafter cited as *Nakamura Notebook*.

[14] The battalion surgeon of the 1st DefBnDet, Lt (jg) Gustave M. Kahn (MC), USN, was ably assisted by his civilian colleague, Dr. Lawton M. Shank, the contractor's surgeon, whose coolness and medical efficiency throughout the siege won high praise.

[15] *Kinney Interview*, 4.

Elsewhere on the atoll new defense work progressed just as rapidly.[16] Emplacements, foxholes, and camouflage were improved at all battery positions. A Navy lighter loaded with dynamite surrounded by concrete blocks was anchored in Wilkes channel to guard this dredged waterway. Telephone lines were repaired, key trunk lines were doubled wherever possible, and every possible attempt was made to bury the most important wires.[17] Construction of more durable and permanent command posts and shelters began before the day ended in a cold drizzle. Working that night under blackout restrictions, aviation Marines and volunteer civilians completed eight blast-proof aircraft revetments. The atoll's four operational planes were thus relatively safe within these revetments when 9 December dawned bright and clear, and Captain Elrod's plane also was in a bunker undergoing repairs to its propeller and engine.

General quarters sounded at 0500, 45 minutes before dawn, and the defense commander set Condition 1. This readiness condition required full manning of all phone circuits, weapons, fire control instruments, and lookout stations. The four F4F–3's warmed up and then took off at 0545 over Peacock Point. They rendezvoused in section over the field and then climbed upward to scout 60- to 80-mile sectors along the most probable routes of enemy approach. At 0700 the fighters finished their search without sighting any enemy planes and then turned back toward the atoll. There the defense detachment shifted to Condition 2 which required that only half the guns be manned, and that fewer men stood by the fire control instruments. This permitted Marines to get after other necessary work around their positions. At the airstrip Lieutenant Kinney continued work on Elrod's plane, and the squadron's engineering problem made it evident that hangar overhaul and blackout facilities had to be set up. Major Putnam decided to enlarge two of his new plane shelters for this purpose. Entrance ramps were cut below ground level, and the revetments were roofed with "I" beams, lumber, and lightproof tarpaulins. These expedients allowed extensive overhaul and maintenance at all hours, and provided maximum protection for planes and mechanics.

As the morning wore on, men began to work closer to their foxholes and to keep a wary eye skyward. A dawn takeoff from the nearby Japanese-mandated Marshalls could bring a second Japanese bomber raid over Wake at any time after 1100. This "clock-watching" was justified. Disgustingly prompt, enemy planes from the *Twenty-Fourth Air Flotilla* at Roi arrived at 1145.[18] Marine Gunner H. C. Borth spotted them first from the water tank OP, and he shouted the warning over the "J"-line circuit. Seconds later the air-ground radio (again in operation with makeshift equipment) passed

[16] Approximately ten per cent of the civilian workers volunteered for military or defensive duties, and some attempted to enlist. Many of these men served with heroism and efficiency throughout the operation.

[17] "Surface lines could not seem to stand up although they were all paralleled. We wanted to bury them, but we could not do so by hand . . . considering the scarcity of men to do the work. We could not obtain permission to use the ditch diggers of the contractors. . . ." LtCol C. A. Barninger reply to HistSec, HQMC questionnaire, 18Feb47, 8–9, hereinafter cited as *Barninger*.

[18] *Enemy Notes*, 1.

this alarm to the combat air patrol, and battery crewmen rushed to general quarters. Soon three bursts of antiaircraft fire, the new alarm signal,[19] were exploding from all sectors, and Wake stood by for its second attack of the war.

The leading Japanese planes approached from the southeast at 13,000 feet, and antiaircraft batteries on Peale Island and Peacock Point opened fire just before the first bombs were released. Minutes earlier the combat air patrol had made contact with one flank of the Japanese planes south of Wake, and Lieutenant Kliewer and Technical Sergeant Hamilton managed to cut off a straggler. They shot it down despite hot return fire from a top turret, and as the enemy plane spun away in flames the ground batteries' 3-inch shells began to burst among the Japanese. The Marine fighters broke contact and withdrew.

The first sticks of bombs exploded around Batteries E and A on Peacock Point and damaged a 3-inch gun in the E Battery position and a range finder at Battery A. Other bombs crashed along the east leg of Wake Island and into Camp Two. There direct hits destroyed the hospital, the civilian and Navy barracks buildings, the garage, blacksmith shop, a storehouse, and a machine shop. The falling bombs then straddled the channel at this tip of Wake and began to rain down on Peale Island. They made a shambles of the Naval Air Station which was still under construction, and scored a direct hit on the radio station. This destroyed most of the Navy's radio gear.[20] Meanwhile the antiaircraft guns continued to fire into the tight Japanese formation, and five bombers were smoking by the time Peale Island was hit. A moment later one of these planes burst into flames and blew up in the air. That was Wake's second certain kill. The others limped away still smoking.[21]

The hospital burned to the ground while the two surgeons saved first the patients and then as much medical supplies and equipment as they had time to salvage. Camp Two and the Naval Air Station were now as badly wrecked as the aviation area had been on the previous day, and four Marines and 55 civilians had been killed. But the defenders had learned some lessons, and the Japanese were not to have such an easy time hereafter. Major Putnam summed it up:

> The original raid . . . was tactically well conceived and skillfully executed, but thereafter their tactics were stupid, and the best that can be said of their skill is that they had excellent flight discipline. The hour and altitude of their arrival over the island was almost constant and their method of attack invariable, so that it was a simple matter to meet them, and they never, after that first day, got through unopposed. . . .[22]

Defenders spent that afternoon collecting wounded, salvaging useful items from blasted ruins, and moving undamaged installations to safer spots. These jobs were to become painfully familiar on succeeding afternoons.

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[19] Wake did not have an air raid alarm, and this traditional three-shot signal was the only alternative. Defenders tried to make an alarm system with dismounted auto horns wired to storage batteries, but it never worked. *Last Man Off Wake Island*, 65, 122.

[20] CO NAS Wake Rpt to ComFourteen, 20-Dec41, 1–2.

[21] A Japanese report indicates that 14 of these bombers were damaged by antiaircraft fire during this attack. *Nakamura Notebook.*

[22] *Putnam Rept*, 10.

The Japanese attack on Battery E at Peacock Point and along the island's east leg suggested to Major Devereux that the enemy would plan their raids in a logical sequence to pass over the atoll's long axis. On the previous day they had struck Wake's aviation, and now they had bombed not only the Naval Air Station but the 3-inch battery which had engaged them so promptly during that first raid. Thus Peacock Point was particularly vulnerable, and to protect his remaining antiaircraft weapons, Devereux ordered Battery E to shift to a new site some six hundred yards east and north. There the battery could manage its job equally well. And to make sure that its fire power did not suffer, the battery drew one of the unused 3-inch guns assigned to the "phantom" Battery F on Wilkes. This weapon replaced the one damaged by bombs.

To provide new hospital facilities, ammunition was cleared from the two most widely-separated reinforced concrete magazine igloos, and these were converted into underground medical centers. Each measured 20 by 40 feet and could accommodate 21 hospital cots. They met blackout requirements, and with lights furnished by two small generators could be operated efficiently at night. Medical supplies were divided between the two aid stations. Dr. Kahn was in charge of the Marine hospital in the southern shelter, and Dr. Shank maintained the Navy-civilian facility at the north end of the row of magazine igloos. Both were in use by nightfall that day.

During the night Battery E displaced to its new position. Aided by contractor's trucks and almost 100 civilian volunteers, Marines moved the guns, sandbags (too valuable and scarce to be left behind), fire control equipment, and ammunition. Emplacements were dug at the new site, sandbags refilled, and the guns readied for action. By 0500, just in time for dawn general quarters, the battery was in position and ready to fire.[23] Dummy guns were set up at the old position.

On 10 December the Japanese confirmed Devereux's theory that they would maintain certain patterns of approach and attack. At about 1045, 26 enemy bombers appeared, this time from the east. Again VMF–211 intercepted, and some of the bombers were hit before they reached the atoll. Captain Elrod, leading the fighters, shot down two enemy planes after the 3-inch guns began to fire. Bombs hit Battery E's abandoned position at Peacock Point, but the new site was not threatened. On Peale Island Battery D received two successive passes by one enemy flight division. The first pass scored a damaging hit on the battery's powerplant, but the guns continued to fire on barrage data. One plane burst into flames.

On Wilkes Island, undamaged from the earlier raids, one stick of bombs lit squarely on a construction dump where 125 tons of dynamite were cached west of the "New Channel."[24] The resultant explosion stripped most of the underbrush off Wilkes, detonated all 5- and 3-inch ready ammunition at battery positions,[25]

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[23] LtCol W. W. Lewis reply to HistSec, HQMC questionnaire, 28Feb47, 1, hereinafter cited as *Lewis*.

[24] The "New Channel" was a partially-completed waterway through the center of Wilkes.

[25] By this time the Btry F position was being activated, but it was not as yet in full commission. Marine Gunner McKinstry, with naval personnel and volunteer civilians, had started that morning to form an antiboat battery with this unit's three guns and the damaged gun inherited from Btry E.

and swept Battery L's emplacement clean of accessories, light fittings and other movable objects. Fortunately only one Marine was killed. Four others were wounded, and one civilian sustained shock. But materiel-wise, Battery L was in serious shape. All fire control instruments except the telescopes on Gun 2 had been blasted away or damaged beyond repair, the gun tubes were dented, firing locks were torn off, and traversing and elevating racks were burred and distorted. Equipment loss at Battery F, organizing that morning, was less serious. One gun was damaged from blast and flying debris. In addition, the 60-inch searchlight on Wilkes had been knocked end over end. This seriously damaged the light's delicate arcs, bearings, and electronic fittings.

After this raid Major Devereux again ordered Battery E to displace. This time it would set up north of the airstrip and near the lagoon in the crotch of Wake. The dummy guns at Peacock Point, damaged by this third raid, were refurbished during the afternoon of 10 December, and Battery E's unmanned fourth gun was detached for antiboat emplacement elsewhere.[26] Battery E's new position would be most advantageous, the battery commander reasoned:

> Most all bombing runs were made from the east or west and the bombs were dropped along the length of the island. In this position the Japanese must make a run for the battery alone and most of the bombs would be lost in the lagoon.[27]

That night the battery personnel sweated through their second displacement, and by next morning they were in position and again ready to shoot.

GENESIS OF THE RELIEF EXPEDITION [28]

After the Pearl Harbor attack, President Roosevelt warned the American people to be prepared for the fall of Wake. Yet before the *Arizona's* hulk stopped burning, plans were underway to send relief to the atoll. But with much of the Pacific Fleet on the bottom of Pearl Harbor, little assistance could be provided. Wake, like other outer islands, would stand or fall on its own unless it could be augmented from the meager resources then at Pearl Harbor. Marine forces on Oahu included two defense battalions, the 3d and 4th,[29] elements of the 1st Defense Battalion, and miscellaneous barracks and ships' detachments. Any personnel sent to relieve Wake would have to come from these units, and that meant that other important jobs would have to be slighted. There was a limited source of equipment including radar and other supplies at Pearl Harbor in the hands of the Marine Defense Force quartermaster; and fighter

[26] This 3-inch gun, which figured conspicuously in the later defense, was located south of the airstrip and the VMF–211 area.

[27] *Lewis*, 2.

[28] Unless otherwise noted the material concerning the Relief Expedition is derived from a magazine article by LtCol R. D. Heinl, Jr., "We're Headed for Wake," *MC Gazette*, June 1946.

[29] This battalion, which during 1941–1943 executed more overseas displacements than any other defense battalion in the Fleet Marine Force, pulled out of Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, during late October 1941, moved secretly through the Panama Canal, and arrived at Pearl Harbor on Monday 1 December. On 7 December the battalion manned a 3-inch battery at the Navy Yard, and also served some antiaircraft machine guns. Since it had just completed this oversea movement, and had its equipment ready for service, the 4th was a logical choice for its eventual role in the attempt to relieve Wake.

aircraft, needed almost as much as radar, were already en route from San Diego on board the USS *Saratoga*.[30]

On 9 December [31] Admiral Kimmel's staff decided to send relief to Wake in a task force built around this carrier, Cruiser Division 6 (cruisers *Astoria*, *Minneapolis*, and *San Francisco*), the nine destroyers of Destroyer Squadron 4, the seaplane tender *Tangier*, which would carry troops and equipment, and the fleet oiler *Neches*. These ships would comprise Task Force 14. While it sailed for Wake, Task Force 11 built around the USS *Lexington*, would make diversionary strikes in the vicinity of Jaluit some 800 miles south of Wake. A third task force, commanded by Vice Admiral Halsey in the carrier *Enterprise*, would provide general support by conducting operations west of Johnston Island.[32]

Men and equipment to aid Wake would be drawn from the 4th Defense Battalion, and on 10 December this unit was alerted for immediate embarkation. The destination was not announced, but it did not require much imagination for rumor to cut through military secrecy. "We're going to Wake" was the word that circulated all day while the batteries prepared to mount out. By nightfall the personnel and equipment were squared away, and units groped about in the blackout to assemble their gear for loading. But in the midst of this work came orders to knock off and return to original battery positions. The CinCPac staff wanted to make a complete new study of the Pacific situation before it sent this relief off to Wake.[33] Besides, the task force had to await the arrival of the *Saratoga*.

CinCPac finally decided to make the attempt to reinforce Wake, and embarkation of certain units of the 4th Defense Battalion began two days later, on 12 December. By this time the Wake defenders had sent a partial list of their most critical needs, and Pearl Harbor supply activities filled this as best they could. These important items, which were loaded in the *Tangier* at pier 10 in the Navy Yard, [34] included an SCR–270 early-warning radar unit and an SCR–268 radar set for fire control. Also stowed on board were 9,000 rounds of 5-inch ammunition, 12,000 of the 3-inch shells with 30-second time fuzes, more than three million rounds of belted ammunition for .50 and .30 caliber machine guns, quantities of grenades, ammunition for small arms, barbed wire, antipersonnel mines, and additional engineering tools. Other equipment would enable the men at Wake to repair their bomb-damaged weapons. This included three complete fire control and data transmission systems for 3-inch batteries, needed replacement equipment for the atoll's 5-inch guns, electrical cable, ordnance tools, and spare parts.

Units of the 4th Defense Battalion embarked for this expedition included Battery F with 3-inch guns, Battery B with 5-inch guns, a provisional machine gun detachment drawn from Batteries H and I,

[30] These planes comprised VMF-221. The *Saratoga* had departed at maximum speed on 8 December (9 December on Wake). Ship's Log USS *Saratoga*, December 1941, hereinafter cited as *Saratoga* log.

[31] Throughout this section dealing with the relief attempt, west longitude dates and local times are used.

[32] CinCPac OPlan 39–41, 15Dec41, 2.

[33] Notes of interview by Capt S. E. Morison, USNR, with RAdm C. H. McMorris, 13Jan47, hereinafter cited as *McMorris Interview*.

[34] USS *Tangier* log, December 1941.

and a headquarters section drawn from the Headquarters and Service Battery of the defense battalion. First Lieutenant Robert D. Heinl, Jr., commanded this force when it completed embarkation on 13 December, but the command passed to Colonel H. S. Fassett just prior to the departure of the task force two days later.[35] After loading, the *Tangier* moved to the upper harbor[36] where Rear Admiral Fletcher's Cruiser Division 6 waited for the *Saratoga*. The carrier came in to fuel on the 15th,[37] and the task force sortied late that day and set course for Wake.

ENEMY PLANS AND ACTIONS, 8–11 DECEMBER[38]

Admiral Inouye, commanding the Japanese *Fourth Fleet* at Truk, had set numerous projects and operations in motion on 8 December. Current war plans called for him to capture and develop Wake, Guam, and certain Gilbert islands including Makin and Tarawa. By 10 December, when Guam fell, Inouye could check off all these jobs except the one at Wake.[39] Despite its small size this atoll was giving the admiral and his people at Truk and Kwajalein some moments of worry. The other islands had fallen to them with little trouble, but they knew that Wake's defense was in better shape. They estimated that this atoll was defended by about 1,000 troops and 600 laborers. Wake's fighter planes were aggressive, and the flak from the island was at least prompt and determined. Between the Marine planes and this flak the *Twenty-Fourth Air Flotilla* surely had lost five of its planes, not counting four more "smokers" that the Wake defenders fervently hoped never made it back to Roi.

This *Twenty-Fourth Air Flotilla* was composed of *Air Attack Forces One* and *Three*. *Force One* flew shore-based bombers, and *Force Three* operated approximately 15 four-engined patrol bombers (probably Kawanishi 97s). *Force One* based on Roi, while *Force Three*, which was also bombing or scouting Baker, Howland, Nauru, and Ocean Islands, flew out of Majuro Atoll 840 miles south of Wake. The commander of this air flotilla had the mission of softening Wake for capture, and he was going about it in a creditable fashion. First he struck the airstrip to clear out the fighter planes, and then he figured to come back with the sky to himself and finish off his job. Subsequent targets had been the Naval Air Station, seaplane facilities, and other installations. With these missions accomplished, the pilots of the *Twenty-Fourth Air Flotilla* could settle down to the methodical business of taking out the antiaircraft and seacoast batteries. Thus the raid of 10 December concentrated on Peale where poor bombing and Battery D's fire held the Japanese to no gains, and on Wilkes where bombs set off the dynamite cache.

After those three strikes the Japanese decided Wake was ripe for a landing, and

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[35] Col Fassett was to become Island Commander at Wake when the relief force arrived at the atoll. ComFourteen orders to Col Fassett, 15Dec41.

[36] *Tangier* log, *op. cit.*

[37] The *Saratoga* arrived in the Hawaiian area during the night of 14 December, but she could not enter the harbor until next day when the antisubmarine nets were opened. *Saratoga* log.

[38] Except as otherwise noted material in this section dealing with Japanese operations is derived from *Capture of Wake; Wake Attack; Nakamura Notebook; Enemy Notes.*

[39] *Campaigns of the Pacific War*, 47.

the job went to Rear Admiral Kajioka who commanded *Destroyer Squadron 6* in his new light cruiser *Yubari*. Kajioka planned to land 150 men on Wilkes Island to control the dredged channel, and 300 men on the south coast of Wake Island to capture the airfield. An alternate plan called for landings on the north and northeast coasts, but the admiral hoped to avoid these beaches unless unfavorable winds kept his men away from the south side of the atoll. The Japanese expected that a landing force of only 450 men would face a difficult battle at Wake, but this force was the largest that Admiral Kajioka could muster at this early date in the war. But if things hit a snag, destroyer crews could be used to help storm the beaches. The naval force at Admiral Kajioka's disposal included one light cruiser (the flagship), two obsolescent light cruisers for fire support and covering duties, six destroyers, two destroyer-transports, two new transports, and two submarines.[40] The *Twenty-Fourth Air Flotilla* would act as his air support. Wake was so small that the admiral did not consider carrier air necessary.

The 450 men of the landing force constituted Kajioka's share of the special naval landing force personnel assigned to the *Fourth Fleet*. It is probable that they were armed with the weapons typical to a Japanese infantry unit of company or battalion size, and that their weapons included light machine guns, grenade launchers, and possibly small infantry cannon. It is likely that assault troops were embarked in the two old destroyer-transports (*Patrol Craft 32 and 33*), while the garrison and base development echelon was assigned to the medium-size transports. The assault shipping from Truk arrived at Roi on 3 December, and on 9 December[41] the force sortied on a circuitous route for Wake.

The Japanese expected no American surface opposition, but they nonetheless screened their approach with customary caution. Two submarines scouted 75 miles ahead of the main body, and these boats were to reconnoiter Wake prior to the arrival of the task force.[42] Specifically they would try to find out whether the atoll defenders had any motor torpedo boats. Behind these submarines, and 10 miles forward of the main body, a picket destroyer maintained station from which it would make landfall and conduct a further reconnaissance. Ships of the task force neared Wake on the evening of 10 December. The weather was bad with high winds and heavy seas, but there was advantage even in this. The squalls provided a natural screen behind which the approach would surely remain undetected. Reports from the submarines and the screening destroyer indicated that Wake was not aware of the Japanese approach, and at 0300 on 11 December the

[40] *Yubari; Tatsuta* and *Tenryu* (2 old light cruisers, comprising Cruiser Division 18); *Oite, Hayate, Mutsuki, Kisaragi, Mochizuki* and *Yayoi* (6 older destroyers, comprising Destroyer Division 29 and 30); Patrol Boats 32 and 33, so-called (actually old destroyers converted into light troop-carrying craft with missions similar to the American APD); and *Kongo Maru* and *Konryu Maru*, both medium transports.

[41] *Capture of Wake*, II, 373 lists this date as 8 December, but other dates from this authority are consistently one day behind, and it is therefore probable that the date of 9 December is correct.

[42] The submarines were scheduled to arrive at Wake prior to dawn, and it is therefore not clear how they expected to make a visual reconnaissance that would be of much value.

task force made landfall and prepared to disembark the landing force. From Kajioka's flagship Wake was barely visible while the admiral led his force to bombardment and debarkation stations five or six miles off the atoll's south shore.

THE ATTEMPTED LANDING, 11 DECEMBER

In spite of Wake's black silent appearance to the Japanese, the atoll defenders had spotted the enemy. Lookouts reported ships in sight just prior to 0300, and as the shadowy outlines drew closer Devereux decided they formed an enemy force which included cruisers, destroyers, and some auxiliaries. The garrison went to general quarters, and Devereux ordered Major Putnam to delay the takeoff of his four airplanes until after the shore batteries began to fire. And these batteries were ordered to hold their fire [43] until they received orders to open up. Major Devereux reasoned that the enemy force could outgun his defense force, and that premature firing would only reveal the location and strength of the seacoast batteries and rob them of a chance to surprise the enemy.

Meanwhile the enemy force was having trouble with the bad weather that had screened its approach. Assault troops found it difficult to make their transfer to sea-tossed landing craft, and some of these craft overturned or became swamped in the high waves. By dawn at 0500, the flagship *Yubari*, still in the van, reached a position approximately 8,000 yards south of Peacock Point. There she turned westward and commenced a broadside run parallel to the south shore of Wake. The other enemy ships followed generally along this course but kept approximately 1,000 yards further to seaward. Although the Japanese were not aware of it, the *Yubari* was being tracked along this course by the 5-inch guns of Battery B on Peacock Point. The camouflage had been removed from battery positions so that the guns could train.[44]

A few minutes later, the *Yubari* and the other two cruisers (*Tatsuta* and *Tenryu*) opened fire at area targets along the south shore of Wake. These salvos laddered the island from Peacock Point to the vicinity of Camp One. The high-velocity 6-inch shells which hit near Camp One ignited the diesel-oil tanks between the camp and Wilkes Channel, and only a repetition of Devereux's order to hold fire restrained Lieutenants Clarence A. Barninger and John A. McAlister, respectively commanding the 5-inch batteries at Peacock and Kuku Points, from returning fire. The other Japanese ships, following the cruiser and destroyer screen, maneuvered to take stations for their various missions.

After completing her initial firing run the *Yubari*, apparently accompanied by the two destroyer-transports, reversed course in a turn which closed the range on Wake. By this time it was daylight, and by 0600 these ships were some 3,500 yards south of Battery A on Peacock Point.[45]

[43] Cdr Cunningham's postwar report states that Maj Devereux wanted to illuminate the enemy force with searchlights and to open fire much sooner, but that this request was denied. *Cunningham Interview*, 7. Devereaux denies this, and he is supported by virtually all other records of the action.

[44] *Barninger*, 4.

[45] The range finders on the 5-inch guns of Btrys A and L had been rendered inoperative by previous bombings, and ranges therefore had to be estimated. This resulted in considerable variance among the later reports of this action. These discrepancies undoubtedly were aggra-

Battery A, with no range finder, had estimated the range to these ships, and the range section personnel were plotting the target while the gun section crews stood by to fire. The order to fire came from Devereux's command post at 0615, and the guns at Peacock Point opened fire on the *Yubari* and the ships with her while Battery L engaged the other enemy ships within range of Wilkes Island. Battery A's first salvo went over the Japanese flagship, and Lieutenant Barninger ordered the range dropped 500 yards. This fire from the beach caused the cruiser to veer away on a zig zag course, and to concentrate her fire on the Battery A guns. Her shots straddled the Marine positions as she pulled away rapidly. Barninger adjusted as best he could for the evasive tactics of the Japanese ship, and his guns soon scored two hits. Both shells entered the cruiser at the waterline amidships on her port side, and the ship belched steam and smoke as she slackened speed. Two more shells then caught her slightly aft of these first wounds, and she turned to starboard to hide in her own smoke. A destroyer then attempted to lay smoke between the troubled cruiser and the shore battery, but it was chased away by a lucky hit from a shell aimed at the cruiser. The *Yubari* continued to fire at Peacock Point until her 6-inch guns could no longer reach the island. Then, listing to port, she limped smoking over the horizon.[46]

Meanwhile Battery L had opened up from Wilkes on the three destroyers, two transports, and the light cruisers *Tatsuta* and *Tenryu* which had broken off from the *Yubari* at the west end of her first firing run. These cruisers and transports steamed north at a range of about 9,000 yards southwest of Kuku Point while the destroyers (probably Destroyer Division 29 consisting of the *Hayate*, *Oite*, and either the *Mutsuki* or *Mochizuki*)[47] headed directly for shore and opened fire. At about 4,000 yards from the island they executed a left (westward) turn, and the *Hayate* led them in a run close along the shore. At that point Battery L opened fire. At 0652, just after the third two-gun salvo, the *Hayate* erupted in a violent explosion, and as the smoke and spray drifted clear, the gunners on Wilkes could see that she had broken in two and was sinking rapidly. Within two minutes, at 0652, she had disappeared from sight.[48] This prompted such spontaneous celebrations in the Battery L positions that a veteran noncommissioned officer had to remind the gun crews that other targets remained.

Fire then shifted to *Oite*, next in line behind the *Hayate*. This destroyer was now so close to shore that Major Devereux had difficulty restraining his .30 caliber machine gun crews from firing at her. A 5-inch gun scored one hit before the on-shore wind carried smoke in front of the target. With this concealment, the destroyers turned to seaward away from Battery L. Marines fired several more salvos into the smoke, but they could not spot the splashes. Some observers on Wilkes thought they saw the *Oite* transfer

vated by the long dispersion pattern characteristic of these flat trajectory naval weapons.

[46] The Btry A commander, whose comments are the source of this account of action against Adm Kajioka's flagship, believes that his guns scored two more hits on the cruiser before she got out of range. *Barninger*, 4–5.

[47] *Wake Attack.*

[48] Platt, *op cit.*, 3. The *Hayate* thus was the first Japanese surface craft sunk during the war by U. S. naval forces.

survivors and sink, but reliable enemy records indicate only that she sustained damage.[49]

Battery L now shifted fire to the transports *Kongo Maru* and *Konryu Maru* then steaming approximately 10,000 yards south of Wilkes. One shell hit the leading transport, and this ship also turned to seaward and retired behind a smoke screen which probably was provided by the two fleeing destroyers. Their course carried them past the transport area. By this time civilians on Wilkes had joined the defensive efforts as volunteer ammunition handlers, and the battery next engaged a cruiser steaming northward 9,000 yards off the west end of the island. This was either the *Tenryu* or the *Tatsuta;* but whatever her identity, she hurried away trailing smoke after one shell struck her near the stern. The departure of this ship, at about 0710, removed the last target from the range of Battery L. In a busy hour, this unit had fired 120 5-inch shells which sank one destroyer, damaged another, and inflicted damage to a transport and a light cruiser. Two Marines had sustained slight wounds.

Meanwhile the other half of the Japanese destroyer force (*Destroyer Division 30*) ran into its share of trouble as it moved west of Kuku Point on a northwesterly course. Led (probably) by the *Yayoi*, these three destroyers at 0600 steamed within range of Battery B's 5-inch guns on Peale. The Marines opened fire on the leading ship, and the Japanese promptly raked Peale with return salvos which scored hits in and about the positions of Batteries B and D. This shelling destroyed communications between Battery B's guns and the battery command post, and put Gun Two out of action with a disabled recoil cylinder. Lieutenant Woodrow W. Kessler, the battery commander, continued his duel with only one gun, and used personnel from Gun Two to help keep up the fire. Ten rounds later a shell caught the *Yayoi* in her stern and set her afire. Kessler then shifted his fire to the second ship which was maneuvering to lay a smoke screen for the injured *Yayoi*. Under this concealment all three destroyers reversed course and retired southward out of range.

The Japanese force was now in full retirement. At 0700 Admiral Kajioka ordered a withdrawal to Kwajalein. Bad weather and accurate Marine fire had completely wrecked the admiral's plan to take Wake with 450 men. But commanders on the atoll took immediate precautions to guard against a dangerous relaxation of defenses. They reasoned that the Japanese might have carrier aircraft ready to continue the attack which the ships had started, and Major Putnam was already aloft with Captains Elrod, Freuler, and Tharin to reconnoiter the area from 12,000 feet. When this search located no enemy aircraft or carriers, the Marine pilots turned southwest to overtake the retiring Japanese task force. The fliers found the enemy little more than an hour's sail from Wake, and they swept down to attack.

Captains Elrod and Tharin strafed and bombed two ships (probably the cruisers *Tenryu* and *Tatsuta*),[50] and got their planes damaged by heavy antiaircraft fire

[49] *Enemy Notes*, 1.

[50] The VMF pilots were not sure about the identification of their targets, but a consultation of all available sources of information seems to substantiate this account of the action.

from these two targets. But the *Tenryu* suffered bomb damage to her torpedo battery, and the *Tatsuta's* topside radio shack was hit. Captain Freuler landed a 100-pound bomb on the stern of the transport *Kongo Maru*, and saw his target flare up with gasoline fires. After dropping their two bombs each, the fliers hurried back to Wake to rearm.

Two fresh pilots, Lieutenant Kinney and Technical Sergeant Hamilton, substituted for two of the original fliers during one of these shuttles between the atoll and the enemy ships, and the air attacks continued for a total of 10 sorties during which the Marines dropped 20 bombs and fired approximately 20,000 rounds of .50 caliber ammunition.[51] The destroyer *Kisaragi*, probably hit earlier by Captain Elrod, finally blew up just as Lieutenant Kinney nosed over at her in an attack of his own. One of the destroyer-transports also sustained damage from the air strikes.

This action was not all "ducks in a barrel" to the Marine fliers, and any damage to the scanty Wake air force was a serious one. Japanese flak cut the main fuel line in Elrod's Grumman, and although he managed to get back to the atoll he demolished his plane in a crash landing amid the boulders along Wake's south beach. Antiaircraft fire pierced the oil cooler and one cylinder in Captain Freuler's plane. He returned to the field safely, but he finished his approach on a glide with a dead engine that could never be repaired.

Accurate assessment of enemy losses in this first landing attempt is not possible. Japanese records indicate, however, that the destroyer *Hayate* was sunk by shore batteries and the destroyer *Kisaragi* by the VMF–211 bombs. Two more destroyers, the *Oite* and the *Yayoi*, were damaged as was a destroyer-transport. The transport *Kongo Maru* was bombed and set afire. All three cruisers (*Yubari*, *Tatsuta*, and *Tenryu*) received injuries from air or surface attacks.[52]

Japanese personnel casualties can be fixed only approximately. Assuming that the two sunken destroyers were manned by crews comparable to those required by similar U. S. types (about 250 officers and men per ship), it would be logical to claim approximately 500 for these two losses with the fair assumption that few if any survivors escaped in either case. Personnel losses on the other seven ships damaged are not known, but it must be assumed that casualties did occur.[53]

[51] CO VMF–211 Rept to CO MAG–21, 20Dec41.

[52] The widely-credited claim, originated in good faith, that dive-bombing attacks sank a cruiser off Wake cannot be supported. All three cruisers returned to Wake less than two weeks later to support the final attack on the atoll. The officially established occasion of the loss of each is as follows: *Yubari* (Philippine Sea, 27 Apr44); *Tenryu* (Bismarck Sea, by submarine action, 18Dec42); *Tatsuta* (off Yokohama, by submarine action, 13May44). As indicated in the text the violent explosion and sinking of the *Kisaragi*, combined with recognition inexperience, probably accounts for the cruiser claimed. ONI StatisticalSec, "Naval Losses of All Nations," (located at NHD), 5Feb46, Table VIII.

[53] In a letter dated 22Nov51, Capt Tashikazu Ohmae, leading Japanese naval student of WW II, puts Japanese losses for this phase of the Wake operation at "nearly 500." Ohmae letter cited in Robert Sherrod, *History of Marine Corps Aviation in World War II* (Washington: Combat Forces Press, 1952), 41, hereinafter cited as *Marine Air History*.

Wake Under Siege[1]

Scarcely had the VMF–211 planes returned to the field before it was time for Lieutenants Davidson and Kinney to fly the only two serviceable fighters on the early midday combat patrol. It was then nearly 1000, almost time for the Japanese bombers to arrive, and the Marines soon spotted 30 of these enemy planes coming out of the northwest at 18,000 feet. Davidson downed two of these aircraft, and Kinney turned a third homeward with smoke trailing behind it. Then the fliers pulled away as the enemy formation entered the range of the Wake guns.

This antiaircraft fire splashed one bomber in the water off Wilkes and damaged three others. Bombs hit close to Battery D on Peale, and others exploded on Wake. There were no Marine casualties, and damage was slight, but the pattern of the attack convinced Devereux that the Japanese had spotted the position of Battery D. As soon as the attack ended he ordered this unit to displace from the neck of Toki Point to the southeastern end of Peale.[2] Marines and civilians began this displacement after dark. Sandbags at the old position could not be reclaimed, and cement bags and empty ammunition boxes had to serve this purpose at the new location. The work was finished by 0445, and Battery D again was ready to fire.

On 12 December the Japanese came to work early. Two four-engine Kawanishi patrol bombers arrived from Majuro at about 0500 and bombed and strafed Wake and Peale Islands. Bombs hit the airstrip but caused little damage. Captain Tharin, who had just taken off on the morning reconnaissance patrol, intercepted one of the big flying boats and shot it down. After this raid the Wake defenders went on with their work. Beach defenses were improved on Wilkes, and the ordnance officer, Gunner Harold C. Borth, serviced Battery L's battered 5-inch guns. At the airfield Lieutenant Kinney managed to patch up one of VMF–221's cripples, and this brought the strength of the Wake air force up to three planes. Such work continued for the remainder of the day. To the surprise of everyone on the atoll, the

[1] Unless otherwise noted the material in Chap 3 is derived from *Devereux Rept; Putnam Rept; (officer's name) Repts*, especially 1stLt J. F. *Kinney Rept*, Major W. L. J. *Bayler Rept*, and LtCol B. D. *Godbold Rept; Devereux Story*.

[2] At 1700, just prior to Battery D's displacement, a smoke bomb and a chain-flare of three red balls was sighted about two miles northeast of Toki Point. This signal was repeated twice in the next 20 minutes. The significance of these signals has not been established. Japanese submarines were operating in the vicinity of Wake, however and it may be that the signals had something to do with rescue operations in which these boats were trying to aid survivors from a bombing raid or from the surface action.

enemy did not arrive for the usual noon raid.[3]

This freedom from attack was a welcome and profitable interlude for the garrison. Captain Freuler, who had been attempting since the opening of the war to devise some means of employing welder's oxygen to augment the dwindling supply for the fighter pilots, finally managed, at great personal hazard, to transfer the gas from commercial cylinders to the fliers' oxygen bottles. Without this new supply the pilots could not have flown many more high altitude missions.

Another important experiment failed. Marines tried to fashion a workable aircraft sound locator out of lumber. It was "a crude pyramidal box with four uncurved plywood sides," by Major Devereux's description. It was too crude to be of any value; it served only to magnify the roar of the surf.

That evening Lieutenants Kinney and Kliewer and Technical Sergeant Hamilton readied Wake's three planes for the final patrol of the day. Kliewer drew a plane that was always difficult to start,[4] and his takeoff was delayed for nearly fifteen minutes. While he was climbing to overtake the other fliers he spotted an enemy submarine on the surface some 25 miles southwest of the atoll. He climbed to 10,000 feet and maneuvered to attack with the sun behind him. He strafed the Japanese boat with his .50 caliber guns, and then dropped his two bombs as he pulled out of his glide. Neither bomb hit, but Kliewer estimated that they exploded within fifteen feet of the target. Bomb fragments punctured his wings and tail as he made his low pull-out, and while he climbed to cruising altitude he saw the enemy craft submerge in the midst of a large oil slick.[5]

After their various activities on 12 December, the atoll defenders ended the day with a solemn ceremony. A large grave had been dug approximately 100 yards southwest of the Marine aid station, and in this the dead received a common burial while a lay preacher from the contractor's crew read simple prayers.

Next day the Japanese did not bother Wake at all, and Marine officers thought it possible that Kliewer's attack on the enemy submarine had brought them this day of freedom. The tiny atoll, frequently concealed by clouds, was a diffi-

[3] From 12 December until about 20 December, another day on which the enemy did not raid Wake, the recollections of surviving defenders sometimes are confused beyond any possible reconciliation. This condition is acute for the period of 12–14 December inclusive. Sources reconstructing the events of those dates arrive at few compatible accounts. This volume attemps to draw the best possible compromise from these conflicts.

[4] *Last Man off Wake Island*, 120.

[5] The fate of this submarine is not known. Enemy records are not clear. But after the fall of Wake, Kinney and other pilots were questioned by a Japanese officer who asked them if they knew anything about a Japanese submarine that had disappeared in the vicinity of the atoll. This led Kliewer to believe that concussion from his bombs had finished off the submarine. The Japanese list two of their submarines (RO–66 and RO–62) sunk 25 miles southwest of Wake on 17 Dec 1941. RO–66 was lost not to enemy action but to disaster, the Japanese said. The cause of the loss of RO–62 is not known, and it therefore may be assumed that there was some confusion as to the date. And since the Wake Marines had trouble remembering exact dates in their postwar reconstruction of specific events, it may be that Kliewer's bombs sank the RO–62. MilHistSec, SS, GHQ, FEC, Japanese Studies in WWII No. 116, The IJN in WWII, February 1952 (located at OCMH).

cult place to find, and the Marines reasoned that the Japanese were using submarine radios as navigational homing aids. Accurate celestial navigation would have been possible at night, but the bombers had been making daylight runs of from 500 to 600 miles over water with no landmarks. By dead reckoning alone this would have been most difficult, yet the bombers hit at about the same time each day. This convinced some of the Marines, including Lieutenant Kinney, that the submarine had been leading them in.[6]

But even this quiet day[7] did not pass without loss. While taking off for the evening patrol, Captain Freuler's plane swerved toward a group of workmen and a large crane beside the runway. To avoid hitting the men or this crane, Freuler made a steep bank to the left. The plane lost lift and settled into the brush, a permanent wash-out. It was set up in the bone yard with other wrecks which were parked to draw bombs.

December 14 started explosively at 0330 when three four-engine Kawanishi 97 flying boats droned over from Wotje[8] and dropped bombs near the airstrip. They caused no damage, and the garrison made no attempt to return fire. But later that day the pilots of the *Twenty-Fourth Air Flotilla* resumed their bombing schedule. Thirty shore-based bombers arrived from Roi at 1100, and struck Camp One, the lagoon off Peale, and the west end of the airstrip. Two Marines from VMF–211 were killed and one wounded, and a direct bomb hit in an airplane revetment finished off another fighter plane, leaving the atoll's aviation unit only one plane that could fly.[9] Lieutenant Kinney, VMF–211's engineering officer, sprinted for the revetment where he was joined by Technical Sergeant Hamilton and Aviation Machinist's Mate First Class James F. Hesson, USN,[10] his two assistants. Despite the fire which engulfed the rear end of the plane, these men accomplished the unbelievable feat of removing the undamaged engine from the fuselage and dragging it clear.

During his morning patrol flight of 15 December, Major Putnam sighted another submarine southwest of Wake. But it appeared to have orange markings, and Putnam did not attack. He thought it might be a Netherlands boat because he had observed markings of that color on Dutch airplanes in Hawaii in late 1941. Putnam's examination of the craft caused it to submerge, however, and Marines later took significant notice of this when the regular bombing raid did not arrive that day. This seemed to add credence to the theory that submarines were providing navigational "beams" for the bombers.

But the Kawanishi flying boats kept the day from being completely free of Japanese harassment. Four to six of these four-motored planes came over at about 1800, and one civilian was killed when the planes made a strafing run along the atoll.

[6] *Kinney Interview*, 4.

[7] On this date hot rations cooked in the contractor's galley were delivered to all battery positions by a "chuck wagon." This service continued for as long as possible thereafter. It was one of Mr. Teters' many contributions to the defense.

[8] *Enemy Notes*, 1.

[9] *Wake File.*

[10] Hesson was a Navy aviation instrument repairman sent over to VMF–211 from the Naval Air Station after the first attack had played such havoc among the fighter squadron's ground personnel. He turned out to be an outstanding general aviation maintenance man.

Their bombing was less effective. They apparently tried to hit Battery D on Peale Island, but most of the bombs fell harmlessly into the lagoon and the others caused no damage.

Meanwhile defensive work continued during every daylight hour not interrupted by such bombing raids. Another aircraft was patched up, personnel shelters for all hands had been completed in the VMF–211 area, and at Peacock Point Battery A now had two deep underground shelters with rock cover three feet thick.[11] And before nightfall on 15 December the garrison completed its destruction of classified documents. This security work began on 8 December when the Commandant of the 14th Naval District ordered Commander Cunningham to destroy reserve codes and ciphers at the Naval Air Station,[12] but codes remained intact in the VMF–211 area. Now Major Bayler and Captain Tharin shredded these classified papers into an oil drum and burned them in a gasoline fire.[13]

On the 16th the Japanese made another daylight raid. Twenty-three bombers from Roi came out of the east at 18,000 feet in an attempt to bomb Peale Island and Camp Two. Lieutenants Kinney and Kliewer, up on air patrol, warned the garrison of this approach, but the Marine fliers had no luck attacking the enemy planes. They did radio altitude information for the antiaircraft gunners, however, and the 3-inch batteries knocked down one bomber and damaged four others. The Japanese spilled their bombs into the waters of the lagooon and turned for home.

But experience had taught the atoll defenders not to expect a rest after this daylight raid was over. The flying boats had become almost as persistent as the shore-based bombers, and at 1745 that afternoon one of the Kawanishis came down through a low ceiling to strafe Battery D on Peale Island. Poor visibility prevented the Marines from returning fire, but the attack had caused little damage. The plane dropped four heavy bombs, but these fell harmlessly into the lagoon. Marines who were keeping score—and most of them were—marked this down as Wake's 10th air raid.

After this attack Wake had an uneasy night. It was black with a heavy drizzle, and maybe this put sentinels on edge just enough to cause them to "see things"—although no one could blame them for this. At any rate lookouts on Wilkes passed an alarm at 0200 that they had sighted 12 ships, and everybody fell out for general quarters. Nothing came of this alarm and postwar Japanese and U. S. records indicate that there were no ships at all around Wake that night.

At 0600 on 17 December Lieutenant Kinney reported proudly that his engineering crew had patched up two more airplanes. This still left the atoll with a four-plane air force, but fliers and other aviation personnel could hardly have been more amazed if two new fighter squadrons had just arrived. Major Putnam called the work of Kinney, Hamilton, and Hesson "magical." [14]

> . . . With almost no tools and a complete lack of normal equipment, they performed all types of repair and replacement work. They changed engines and propellers from one airplane to another, and even completely built up new

[11] *Wake File.*

[12] *Cunningham Interview,* 4.

[13] *Last Man Off Wake Island,* 112.

[14] *Putnam Rept,* 15.

engines and propellers from scrap parts salvaged from wrecks. . . . all this in spite of the fact that they were working with new types [of aircraft] with which they had no previous experience and were without instruction manuals of any kind. . . . Their performance was the outstanding event of the whole campaign.[15]

"Engines have been traded from plane to plane, have been junked, stripped, rebuilt, and all but created," another report said of Kinney's engineering work.[16]

At 1317 that afternoon 27 Japanese bombers from Roi came out of the southwest at 19,000 feet. Their bombs ignited a diesel oil tank on Wilkes and destroyed the defense battalion messhall as well as much tentage and quartermaster gear at Camp One. A bomb explosion also damaged one of the evaporator units upon which Wake depended for its water supply. The 3-inch guns brought down one of these planes.

Later that day one of the Kinney-patched fighter planes washed out during take-off, and it had to be sent back to the boneyard. Then at 1750 came the heaviest raid the Kawanishi flying boats ever put into the air against Wake.[17] Eight of these planes bombed and strafed the atoll but inflicted little damage.

As if the Wake defenders did not already have their hands full, construction authorities in Pearl Harbor wanted to know how things were going with the lagoon dredging. They also asked for a specific date on which the atoll would have certain other improvements completed. The island commander prefaced his preliminary reply to this query with an account of the latest air raid, and followed this with a damage report which summarized his battle losses since the beginning of the war. He pointed out that half of his trucks and engineering equipment had been destroyed, that most of his diesel fuel and dynamite were gone, and that his garage, blacksmith shop, machine shop, and building supplies warehouse either had been blasted or burned to the ground.

In a supplementary report sent later, Commander Cunningham told the Pearl Harbor authorities that everybody on Wake had been busy defending the atoll and keeping themselves alive. They could not do construction work at night, he pointed out, and if they used too much heavy equipment during the day they could not hear the bombers approaching. Besides, he reiterated, much of his equipment had been destroyed by the bombing raids, and most of his repair facilities had met the same fate. On top of all this, he added, civilan morale was bad. Cunningham said he could not promise a completion date on anything unless the Japanese let up the pressure.[18] The originator of this Pearl Harbor query might have found a pointed hint in this reference to a let-up of pressure. But at any rate Cunningham never again was asked how his construction work was coming along.

The 18th of December was quiet.[19] One enemy plane was sighted in the vicinity of

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] CO VMF-211 Rept to CO MAG-21, 20Dec41, 2.

[17] As an example of how memories can grow dim, not a single defender remembered to mention this raid in accounts prepared after the war ended. Yet there is no doubt that the raid occurred, because the garrison reported it to Pearl Harbor that same afternoon. *Wake File.*

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] Likewise typical of the day-to-day confusion which exists in the Wake records and recollections is the fact that contemporary records—the Wake dispatches and Maj Bayler's official narrative report prepared in December 1941—

Wake, however, and the defenders considered its activity ominous. It was almost directly overhead at about 25,000 feet when first sighted. Well beyond antiaircraft or fighter range, it flew northwest along the axis of the atoll, and then turned south, presumably returning to Roi. Defenders believed this to be a photo-reconnaissance flight.

Next morning the defenders continued their routine work, trying to add to their defensive installations before the bombers were due. This was a routine now familiar to them. After being cleared from morning general quarters, the men went about their work until the midday raid sent them to gun positions or to cover. After that raid was over, the men cleaned up after the bombs or went ahead with their other duties. Then late in the afternoon they had to take time out to deal with the flying boats. At night they could usually sleep when they were not on sentry duty, or standing some other type of watch. Following this pattern, crew members of the various batteries had completed their sturdy emplacements, and everybody had contributed to the construction of primary and alternate positions for beach defense. They had built more beach positions than they could possibly man, but many of these were to be manned only under certain conditions.[20] The shortage of trained fighting men was so critical that a well coordinated Japanese landing attack would require them to be everywhere at once.

At 1050, 27 bombers from Roi came in from the northwest at about 18,000 feet. They worked over the VMF–211 area south of the airstrip, finished off the Marines' messhall and tentage at Camp One, and struck the PanAir area. Batteries D and E hit four of these bombers, and observers on the atoll saw one of them splash after its crew bailed out over the water. Bomb damage at Camp One was serious, but elsewhere it was slight, and there were no casualties.

December 20 dawned gloomily with heavy rain, and ceilings were low and visibility poor all day. This wide weather front apparently dissuaded the Japanese from attempting their usual noon visit, but it did not stop a U. S. Navy PBY which arrived that day and provided Wake with its first physical contact with the friendly outer world since the start of the war. This plane landed in the lagoon at 1530 to deliver detailed information about the planned relief and reinforcement of the atoll. These reports contained good news for nearly everyone. All civilians except high-priority workers were to be evacuated. A Marine fighter squadron (VMF–221) would fly in to reinforce VMF–211, which was again down to a single plane. And the units from the 4th Defense Battalion would arrive on the *Tangier* to reinforce the weakened detachment of the 1st Defense Battalion. The PBY fliers had a copy of the *Tangier's* loading plan,[21] and this list made the ship seem like some fabulous floating Christmas package that was headed for the atoll.

That night Commander Cunningham, Majors Devereux and Putnam, and Lieu-

indicate that the memories of the survivors have almost unanimously transposed the events of 17 and 18 December.

[20] LtCol A. A. Poindexter reply to HistSec, HQMC questionnaire, 8Apr47.

[21] Capt W. S. Cunningham, USN, ltr to Capt S. E. Morison, USNR, 7Feb47; *McMorris Interview*, 2; CinCPac OPlan 39–41, 15Dec41.

tenant Commander Greey prepared reports to send back to Pearl Harbor. Major Bayler, his mission long since completed, would carry the papers back as he complied with his orders directing him to return from Wake "by first available Government air transportation." Mr. Hevenor, the Bureau of the Budget official who had missed the *Philippine Clipper* on 8 December, also planned to leave on the PBY, but someone pointed out that he could not travel in a Naval aircraft without parachute and Mae West, neither of which was available. So Mr. Hevenor missed another plane.

At 0700 next morning, 21 December, the PBY departed. Within less than two hours, at 0850, 29 Japanese Navy attack bombers, covered by 18 fighters, lashed down at Wake through the overcast and bombed and strafed all battery positions. These were planes from *Carrier Division 2* (*Soryu* and *Hiryu*), called in by the Japanese to help soften Wake's unexpected toughness.[22] Due to the low ceiling, the attack was consummated before the 3-inch batteries could get into action, but the .50 caliber antiaircraft machine guns engaged the enemy. The attack caused little damage, but its implications were ominous.

Only three hours later, 33 of the shore-based Japanese bombers arrived from Roi, and again they concentrated on Peale Island and Camp Two. They approached from the east at 18,000 feet in two main formations, and the bombs from the second group plastered Battery D's position on Peale. This unit had fired 35 rounds in half a minute and had hit one bomber when a bomb fell squarely inside the director emplacement of the battery. This explosion killed the firing battery executive, Platoon Sergeant Johnalson E. Wright, and wounded the range officer and three other Marines.

Now there was only one firing director mechanism left on the atoll, and it belonged to Battery E located in the crotch of Wake Island. But Battery E had no height finder, although Battery D still had one of these. Thus the two 3-inch batteries had only enough fire control equipment for one battery. Because of Battery E's more desirable location, and because it had escaped damage since its move to this spot, Major Devereux decided to maintain it as his primary antiaircraft defense of the atoll. Thus by taking over Battery D's height finder, certain other fire control gear, one gun, and the necessary personnel, Battery E became a fully manned and fully equipped four-gun battery. Two other Battery D guns were shifted to a new position on Peale Island where they could assume beach-defense missions, and the fourth gun remained at the original battery position. Dummy guns also were mounted there to create the impression that the battery was still intact. As a further measure of deception, Battery F on Wilkes, also reduced to two guns, would open fire by local control methods whenever air raids occurred. Battery D was parceled out that night, and by next morning the garrison on Peale had been reduced to less than 100 Marines and a small group of civilians who had been trained by Marine noncommissioned officers to man one of Battery D's guns.[23]

[22] *Capture of Wake*, II, 372.

[23] Of these civilians the Peale Island commander, Capt Godbold, later wrote: "The civilians who served with this battery were of inestimable value . . . under the capable leadership of Sergeant Bowsher, they soon were firing their gun in a manner comparable to the Marine-manned guns. Before the surrender of the is-

By 22 December VMF–211 again had two airplanes capable of flight, and Captain Freuler and Lieutenant Davidson took them up for morning patrol. Davidson had been out almost an hour and was covering the northern approaches to Wake at 12,000 feet when he spotted enemy planes coming in. He called Captain Freuler, who was then south of the atoll, and the Marines began independent approaches to close with the enemy. The Japanese flight consisted of 33 carrier attack planes (dive bombers) escorted by six fighters, all from the *Soryu-Hiryu* carrier division. The fighters were at 12,000 feet and the dive bombers at 18,000. The fighters were of a sleek new type, the first Zeros to be encountered over Wake.

Captain Freuler dived his patched-up F4F–3 into a division of six fighters, downing one and scattering the others. Coming around quickly in a difficult opposite approach, Freuler attacked another of the Zeros and saw it explode only 50 feet below. This explosion temporarily engulfed the Grumman in a cloud of flames and flying fragments. The Marine plane was badly scorched, its manifold-pressure dropped, and the controls reacted sluggishly. As the captain turned to look for the atoll, he saw Lieutenant Davidson attacking the dive bombers. The lieutenant was diving at a retreating bomber, but a Zero was behind him closing on the Marine Grumman. This enemy fighter probably downed Davidson, because the lieutenant did not return to the atoll.

Meanwhile a Zero got on Freuler's tail while he took in Davidson's plight, and fire from the Japanese plane wounded the Marine pilot in the back and shoulder. Freuler pushed his plane over into a steep dive, managed to shake off his pursuer, and dragged the shattered, scorched F4F into the field for a crash landing. In the words of Lieutenant Kinney, whose shoestring maintenance had kept VMF–211 flying for fifteen days: "This left us with no airplanes." In spite of the Marine squadron's last blaze of heroism, the enemy dive bombers came on in to strike at all battery positions. But the atoll pilots were not much impressed by the work of the Japanese naval aviators. "We who have been used to seeing only the propeller hub are a bit taken aback by their shallow dives and their inaccuracies," Lieutenant Barninger said. The Japanese bombs did not cause much damage, and there were no casualties on the ground.

But now that carrier air was being brought to bear against them, the Wake defenders concluded that it would not be long before the Japanese came back with a bigger task force and a better amphibious plan. Ground defense preparations intensified that afternoon. VMF–211's effectives—less than 20 officers and men—were added to the defense battalion as infantry, Peale Island completed its beach defense emplacements, and Captain Platt drew up final detailed orders for his defense of Wilkes. Platt ordered Marine Gunner McKinstry, who commanded Battery F, to fire on enemy landing boats as long as his guns could depress sufficiently, and then to fall back to designated positions from which his men would fight as riflemen. There these men from the 3-inch battery would be joined by the personnel from Battery L. After that it would be an infantry fight. "All that can be done

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land, some of these men were slated to be evacuated to Honolulu; however, the entire gun crew offered to stay on the island and serve with the battery." LtCol B. D. *Godbold Rept*, 14.

is being done," noted one of the Wake officers, "but there is so little to do with." [24]

ENEMY PLANS AND ACTIONS, 11–21 DECEMBER [25]

Wake defenders were correct in assuming that the Japanese soon would be back with a stronger effort than the one which had failed for Rear Admiral Kajioka. The admiral began to mull a few plans for his next attack while he withdrew toward Kwajalein on 11 December, and he had his staff in conference on 13 December while his battered fleet still was anchoring in that Marshall atoll. Rear Admiral Kuniori Marushige, who had commanded *Cruiser Division 18* (including the light cruisers *Tatsuta* and *Tenryu* as well as the flagship *Yubari*), analyzed the causes of failure as follows: The landing attempt had failed, he said, because of the vigorous seacoast artillery defense, fighter opposition, adverse weather, and because of insufficient Japanese forces and means.

But Admiral Kajioka was more interested in the success of the next operation, and so was *Fourth Fleet* Commander Inouye at Truk. While the ships remaining in Kajioka's task force were being patched up at Kwajalein, Admiral Inouye sent destroyers *Asanagi* and *Yunagi* over to replace the destroyers lost in the Wake action. He also added the *Oboro*, a much more powerful and newer ship of destroyer-leader characteristic which was armed with six 5-inch guns.[26] The mine layer *Tsugaru* came over from Saipan with the *Maizaru Special Landing Force Number Two;* and the transport *Tenyo Maru* and the float-plane tender *Kiyokawa* also joined the force. Troop rehearsals began on 15 December, but Admiral Inouye still was not convinced that his force was large enough, and he asked the Commander in Chief of the *Combined Fleet* to send him more ships.

Inouye's superior officer, now apparently convinced that Wake would be hard to crack, sent to the *Fourth Fleet* admiral the fleet carriers *Soryu* and *Hiryu* of *Carrier Division 2*, heavy cruisers *Aoba*, *Furutaka*, *Kako*, and *Kinugasa* of *Cruiser Division 6*, heavy cruisers *Tone* and *Chikuma* of *Cruiser Division 8*, and a task force screen of six destroyers.[27] The commander of the *Combined Fleet* assigned over-all command of this Wake task force to Rear Admiral Koki Abe, commander of *Cruiser Division 8*. Rear Admiral Kajioka retained his command of the amphibious force.

Plans for the second attack against the American atoll called for more softening up than Wake had received previous to Kajioka's first attempt to land troops there. On 21 December, two days prior to the proposed landing, the aircraft of *Carrier Division 2* would work over the atoll's defenses to destroy first the U. S. air capability and then the shore batteries and the antiaircraft weapons. Then the amphibious force would move up for the landing, and in order that the atoll might be surprised [28] there would be no preliminary naval bombardment on 23 December.

To make sure that troops got ashore, the two destroyer-transports (*Patrol Craft*

[24] LtCol C. A. *Barninger Rept.*

[25] Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *Capture of Wake; Enemy Notes.*

[26] ONI 222-J, "A Statistical Summary of the Japanese Navy," 20Jul44, 56.

[27] *Ibid.*, 47, 49.

[28] *Capture of Wake*, II, 372.

32 and *33*) would run aground on the south shore of the atoll near the airstrip, and the approximately 1,000 men of the special naval landing force [29] would then be carried to the beach in four to six landing barges. Two of these would land on Wilkes Island, two on Wake Island between the airstrip and Camp One, and the other two probably provided for would put their troops ashore just west of Peacock Point.[30] If these special landing force troops ran into serious trouble on the atoll, the naval force would send in 500 men organized from ships' landing forces. And if this combined force failed to subdue the atoll defenders, more help would be sent by means of an ultimate and desperate expedient. The destroyers of the task force would be beached, and their crews would swarm ashore. Admiral Inouye was determined that this second attack should not fail.

The possibility of U. S. naval surface intervention was taken into consideration. This possibility had been dismissed during planning for the attack of 11 December because the Japanese reasoned that the shock of Pearl Harbor would immobilize American surface operations for some time. But now the Japanese assumed that U. S. surface opposition was probable. To guard against such threat, the four heavy cruisers of *Cruiser Division 6* would act as a covering force east of Wake. If a major surface action developed, Rear Admiral Abe would enter the fight with *Cruiser Division 8* and conduct the battle. As on the first attempt, submarines would precede the invasion force to reconnoiter the island and to look out for U. S. surface forces.

With these final plans issued, the invasion force well rehearsed, and carriers *Soryu* and *Hiryu* on their way down from north of Midway, the operation against Wake was ready to go. At 0900 on 21 December Admiral Kajioka cleared Roi with the ships of his amphibious force and headed back up toward the American-held atoll.

THE RELIEF ATTEMPT, 15–23 DECEMBER [31]

Now the U. S. commanders taking help to Wake were in a race with Admiral Kajioka, even if they did not know it. Admiral Fletcher's Task Force 14 sortied from Pearl Harbor in two task groups on 15 and 16 December,[32] rendezvoused southwest of Oahu during the afternoon of this second day, and sailed westward toward Wake. Fletcher's force was to arrive at the atoll on 23 December (east longitude time). There the pilots of Major Verne J. McCaul's VMF–221 would fly in from the carrier *Saratoga* while the *Tangier* anchored off Wilkes channel to unload supplies, equipment, and the Marines from the 4th Defense Battalion.[33] After taking wounded men

[29] *Wake Attack*, 2.

[30] HistSec, HQMC interview with Col J. P. S. Devereux, 12Feb47, 8, hereinafter cited as *Devereux Interview*.

[31] Principal sources bearing on the Relief Expedition are: CinCPac OPlan 39–41, 15Dec47; *McMorris Interview; Saratoga* log; LtCol R. D. Heinl, Jr., "We're Headed for Wake," *MC Gazette*, June 1946.

[32] Dates in this section are either west or east longitude as applicable to the location of events identified by dates. Where confusion is possible the type of date will be indicated.

[33] Troops and equipment would be transported to the atoll on lighters, and if the *Tangier* were seriously damaged by enemy action she would be run aground so the cargo would not be lost.

and certain civilians on board, these ships then would return to Pearl Harbor.

But the advance was aggravatingly slow. The old fleet oiler *Neches*, in the train with the *Tangier*, could not manage more than 12 knots, and the fleet's zig-zag evasive tactics further slowed the rate of advance. To the Marines and seamen in this first westward sally of the war, the waters beyond Oahu seemed very lonely and ominous, and there was no contact, either friendly or enemy, to vary the tense monotony of the run. Each day on the *Tangier* began with general quarters and then lapsed into normal shipboard routine. Marines received such training and instruction as could be fitted into this schedule, and part of this educational program included lectures by the few radar technicians on board.

The few available maps and charts of Wake received intense study. In anticipation that Wake's 3-inch guns might have to deliver direct fire on ships or ground targets, improvised sights were designed and constructed in the ship's machine shops. The officer commanding the machine-gun detachment contrived with the ship's force to construct special slings with which his .50 caliber antiaircraft machine guns could be hoisted from ship to barges while remaining ready to ward off possible enemy attacks during unloading. The 5-inch seacoast men stayed in practice by standing their share of watches on the after 5-inch gun of the *Tangier*. All Marine antiaircraft machine guns were set up and manned on the superstructure.

On 18 December CinCPac ordered U. S. submarines which were patrolling in the vicinity of Wake to move south out of the area. These boats of Task Force 7 were to patrol around Rongelap in the Marshalls until the relief expedition reached Wake. CinCPac wanted to avoid any possibility of one U. S. force confusing another for the enemy.[34] Three days later, on the 21st, intelligence information which had been arriving at Pearl Harbor indicated that a large force of shore-based Japanese planes was building up in the Marshalls, and that enemy surface forces might be east of Wake where they could detect the approach of Fletcher's Task Force 14. Other reports indicated the presence of Japanese carriers, including possibly the *Soryu*, northwest of the atoll. Fletcher's mission, now about 650 miles east of Wake, appeared to be growing more hazardous with each hour. CinCPac ordered the carrier *Lexington* and other ships of Task Force 11 over from the southeast to give Fletcher closer support.[35]

By 0800 on 22 December, Task Force 14 was within 515 miles of Wake, and Admiral Fletcher in the cruiser *Astoria* kept up on the news about his race by monitoring the CinCPac radio nets. Ominous reports of Japanese surface operations around the atoll continued to filter in at Pearl Harbor, but conditions at Wake were unchanged. Fletcher decided to refuel. Although his destroyers still had a reasonable supply of oil, it might not be enough if they had to fight. But this very act of fueling, which took most of the day, kept them out of the fight. By the time the U. S. ships moved on toward Wake, Admiral Kajioka was only about 50 miles from the atoll with his amphibious force. Fletcher had lost the race.

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[34] Paraphrased file of CinCPac dispatches concerning Wake relief, December 1941.

[35] *Ibid.*

The Fall of Wake[1]

At Wake, 23 December began with intermittent rain squalls, and shortly after 0100 the defenders saw a succession of vivid, irregular flashes beyond the horizon north of Peale Island. Men on the atoll could hear nothing above the rain and the boom of the surf, but it was obvious that the flashes were not signals or searchlights. They were too brilliant and irregular for that. Old fleet-duty hands were reminded of night battle practice at sea. Was there a naval battle, or were the Japanese coming back? The defenders could only guess.

By this time the Marines were used to seeing lights, even though these were unusual. But at 0145 came a more urgent alarm. The word over the "J"-line announced that the Japanese were landing at Toki Point on Peale. Major Devereux alerted all units and then telephoned Lieutenant Kessler at Toki Point for additional information. The Battery B commander told Devereux that he could see lights in the distance but that there was no landing in progress. The beach positions had been manned, Kessler added, because boats were "believed" to be somewhere offshore. By this time all units had sent their men to general quarters, and at Camp One, Second Lieutenant Poindexter loaded his scanty mobile reserve unit of eight Marines[2] and four .30 caliber machine guns into their truck, reported his actions to the command post, and moved out toward Peale Island. But the word from Kessler had convinced Devereux that if the enemy were landing, they were not doing it on Peale Island. He put a damper on the general alarm, and ordered that Poindexter be intercepted when his truck passed the command post. He held the mobile reserve there to await developments.

THE JAPANESE APPROACH

Developments were not long in coming. Admiral Kajioka's amphibious force had at last sighted the atoll's faint outline, and the ships were reducing speed. Moments later, in the words of a Japanese "combat correspondent" who was moved to poetry by this amphibious venture, "The honorable, first order of 'CHARGE' was given, and the daring officers and men, with white sashes, bravely went down to the surface of the sea."[3]

[1] Unless otherwise noted the material in Chap 4 is derived from *Devereux Rept; Putnam Rept; (Officer's name) Repts*, especially LtCol W. McC. *Platt Rept*, 1stLt J. A. *McAlister Rept*, MG C. B. *McKinstry Rept; Devereux Interview;* replies to HistSec questionaire by Col G. H. Potter, LtCol W. McC. Platt, LtCol A. A. Poindexter; *Capture of Wake; Wake Attack; Hawaii-Malaya NavOps; Devereux Story.*

[2] This unit, along with a few Marines from supply and administration sections and 15 Navy enlisted men commanded by BM 1stCl James E. Barnes, was also responsible for the defense of Camp One.

[3] This latter-day Masefield was Kayoshi Ibushi of the Japanese Naval Information Section.

Approximately 800 of the *SNLF* troops were distributed between the two destroyer-transports.[4] The other 200 presumably were embarked on board one or more of the transports or the float-plane tender *Kiyokawa*, and the 500 sailors of the provisional reserve force apparently were to remain at their normal duties unless called to reinforce the landing effort.[5] The *Maizuru Second Special Naval Landing Force*, now brought to full strength by reinforcements from Saipan, was essentially a Japanese version of the battalion landing team (BLT). Its three rifle companies had numerical designations but were more commonly identified by the names of their commanders. Thus the *1st Company*, commanded by Lieutenant Kinichi Uchida, was often called the *Uchida unit*. Similarly, the *2d* and *3d Companies* were styled respectively the *Takano unit* and the *Itaya unit*.

The *Uchida* and *Itaya companies* would assault Wake Island while 100 "picked men" of the *Takano unit* seized Wilkes.[6] The balance of the *Takano company* presumably would back up the other two companies on Wake Island. At about the time the premature landing alarm was sounded on the atoll, the amphibious force was putting landing craft over the side. The weather was giving them trouble, but at about 0200 the *SNLF* troops clambered down into these craft. "The hardships encountered in lowering the landing barges were too severe even to imagine," reported correspondent Ibushi. "Now we, the Naval Landing Force, on the barges which we were in, must charge into enemy territory and carry out the final step of securing a landing point after touching the shore."[7]

As the landing craft pitched through the breakers, the destroyer-transports turned to make their final runs onto the reef south of the airstrip. These vessels, *Patrol Boats 32* and *33*, mounted the reef in a smother of breakers and foam, and went aground near the west end of the airstrip. Two of the landing barges scraped bottom as they approached the reef near Camp One, and still there was no sign that the atoll defenders were awake. But suddenly tracers pencilled from the beach at Wilkes Island and .50 caliber slugs splattered through the gunwales of one barge. Then a searchlight from Wilkes flared on to silhouette the picked men of the *Takano unit* landing on that island. It was then 0245, and the battle for Wake was on. (See Map 5, Map Section)

THE DEFENSE OF WAKE ISLAND

Since 0215 Marines had been confident that a landing against them was in prog-

"This reporter," as he later said of himself, ". . . was able to have the honor of taking the first step upon the island as a man of letters . . . the capture of Wake Island . . . was so heroic that even the gods wept." *Hawaii-Malaya NavOps*, 32.

[4] One account says 500 men of this force were on the two destroyer-transports. At this time all SNLF units attached to the Fourth Fleet were concentrated for the seizure of Wake in much the same manner that U. S. Fleet Marine Force units would have been employed.

[5] The exact number of Japanese troops who fought on Wake has not been determined. Adm Morison cites Marine estimates that "at least 1,200 troops landed early on the 23rd," and that others came ashore after the surrender. *Rising Sun in the Pacific*, 245.

[6] Itaya's name and that of his company appears in one Japanese source as "Itatani." *Hawaii-Malaya NavOps*, 28.

[7] *Ibid.*

ress. Lights could be seen offshore north of Peale Island and all along the south coasts of Wake and Wilkes Island. At about 0230 Marines on Peacock Point thought they could see the outlines of two barges heading along the coast toward the airfield, but these evidently were the patrol craft heading in toward the reef. By now Major Devereux, Major Potter, his executive officer, a radioman, and a switchboard operator in the defense detachment command post were swamped by reports of sounds, lights, and shapes. As he collected this information and relayed reports to Commander Cunningham, Devereux saw that the greatest threat was developing along the south coast of the atoll, and he dispatched Lieutenant Poindexter's eight-man mobile reserve to defensive positions between Camp One and the airstrip.

Poindexter's men had not left the truck, and the lieutenant had them transported down the island and into position within 15 minutes. The area into which they moved was just west of the road junction near the west end of the airstrip. There this small force commanded the south shore road as well as the critical beach section south of the field. The lieutenant reported that this area was being bombarded when he reached his defensive positions, but there were no signs of a landing.

But at 0235 [8] defenders on Wilkes reported that they could hear barge engines above the surf, and Marine Gunner McKinstry opened fire with a .50 caliber machine gun at a dark shape near the beach below. Ten minutes later Captain Platt requested permission to illuminate the beach with his 60-inch searchlight, and the landing was discovered. Two barges could be seen on the beaches at Wilkes, the lights also revealed the patrol craft aground off Wake.

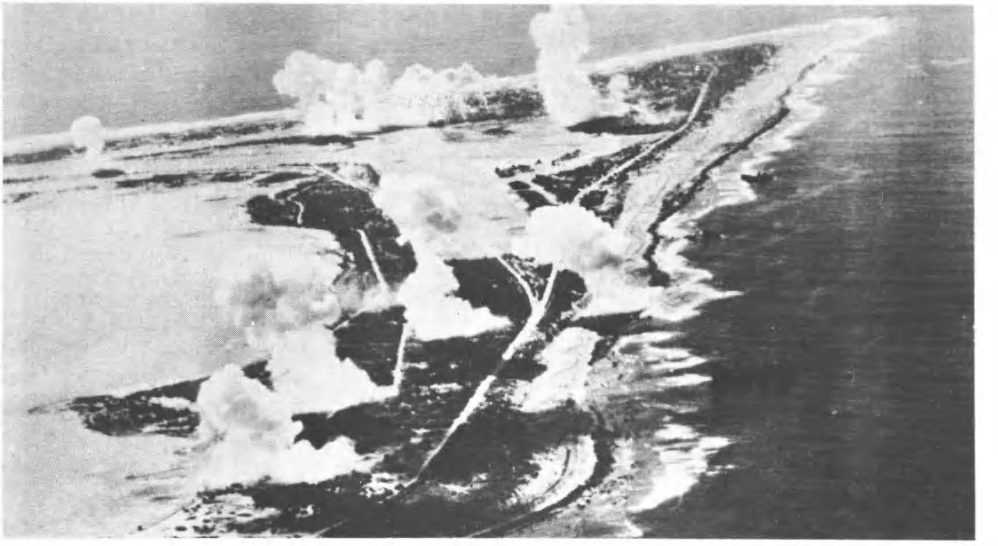
Neither of the 5–inch batteries which commanded the south approaches to Wake [9] could bear against the landings. Terrain masks likewise prevented them from firing at *Patrol Craft 32* and *33* on the reef.[10] The only weapon larger than a machine gun that could engage these destroyer-transports, already beginning to spew out their human cargo, was the 3-inch gun emplaced on the rise between the beach road and VMF–211's hard-stand parking area. But this gun was not manned. Realizing the importance of this weapon, Second Lieutenant Robert M. Hanna, in command of the antiaircraft machine guns about the field, gathered a scratch crew consisting of one Marine, Corporal Ralph J. Holewinski, and three civilians [11] and

[8] The Japanese list 0235 as the official time of their landing. Statements of Marine officers do not agree. Some say the landings came at about 0130, while others place the time almost an hour later. In his official report, Devereux gives the time of landing on Wilkes at 0215, but his published narrative says 0120. Yet a subsequent study convinced him that the time of 0235 was closer to the fact. Excepting the variances concerning events during these dark early hours of the battle, Marine accounts agree generally as to events after daylight.

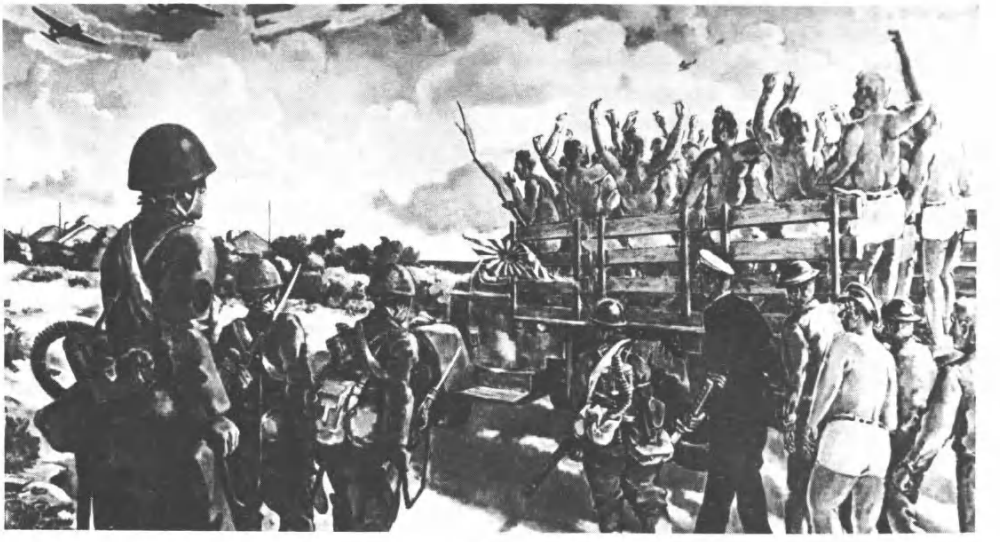
[9] Btry A (Peacock Point) and Btry L (Wilkes).

[10] One of the advantages of the Navy 5''/51 for seacoast defense missions was that it had 360° train, as contrasted to the limited traverse of the 155mm field guns used by the Army for this role. In this instance, however, terrain masks, slight though they were, prevented either A or L from bearing.

[11] 1stLt R. M. *Hanna Rept* to CO, 1st DefBnDet, 11Oct45, 2. Of these three civilians, two (Paul Gay and Bob Bryan) were subsequently killed in action, and the third, Eric Lehtola, was wounded. Hanna states that they fought with "exceptional gallantry."



JAPANESE PATROL CRAFT *lost in the assault on Wake Island are silent witnesses to an American carrier raid during the last days of the war. (USN 495560)*



JAPANESE NAVAL TROOPS *who took Wake Atoll are shown in a contemporary propaganda painting taking their prisoners toward a collecting point. (SC 301066)*

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raced to this gun. Major Devereux also realized the critical importance of holding this area, and he ordered Major Putnam and the 20 men of VMF–211 to form an infantry support between the 3–inch gun and the enemy landing.

All defense units on Wake Island were disposed to meet the enemy. Hanna and the VMF–211 "infantrymen" held the left flank south of the airfield parking area. To the west, and squarely in the path of the enemy's initial rush toward the west end of the field, were Second Lieutenant Kliewer and three aviation Marines. They guarded one of the generators which was wired to detonate the mines buried in the airstrip. At the road junction farther west Poindexter's mobile reserve was already firing its four machine guns eastward along the beach at *Patrol Craft 32* where the enemy troops had revealed themselves by injudicious use of pyrotechnic signals. At Camp One four .30 caliber machine guns were manned for beach defense by Battery I's gun shed crew and the Naval Air Station sailors who had been serving as lookouts on the water tank OP. Behind this general line, two .50 caliber machine-gun sections (each of two guns) guarded the airstrip. One section held the west end of the strip near Lieutenant Kliewer's generator, and the other section was located on the east end of the strip.[12] These two sections could command the length of the field, and could partially interdict movement across the field. Other machine guns were in the Peacock Point area. At the battery positions gun crews stood by their weapons and manned such local perimeter defenses as their meager strength permitted.

Lieutenant Hanna and his jury-rigged crew quickly got the 3–inch gun into action. They laid the weapon by estimate and "Kentucky windage",[13] and fired their first round at *Patrol Craft 33* which was less than 500 yards away. The shell hit the bridge of the destroyer-transport, and wounded the captain, the navigator, and five seamen. Two other sailors were killed. While men of the *Uchida* and *Itaya units* swarmed off the ship, Hanna and his crew fired 14 more rounds into the superstructure and hull of the craft. Finally it burst into flames, illuminating the landing area. "The scene was too beautiful to be a battlefield," reported a Japanese observer on board the cruiser *Yubari*.[14]

Flames from this ship lighted *Patrol Craft 32* farther west along the beach, and Hanna shifted his fire to this vessel. Three-inch shells hulled this transport-destroyer, and crews from both these ships joined the *SNLF* troops landing on the island. This added possibly 100 extra men to the battle ashore, and Hanna's gun already was seriously threatened by the *Uchida unit* which had made the beach assault. Major Putnam's aviators fought off these early attempts to silence the 3-inch gun, but the Japanese continued to attack. Alternating between creeping infiltration tactics and screaming rushes, the Uchida troops drove the Marines back on each side

[12] These two sections had been sited to provide antiaircraft fire as well as final protective fire along the airstrip. This conformed with defense battalion practice, but the light of hindsight prompted Devereux to wish that he had moved these sections closer to the beach where they could have been tied in with the general line.

[13] These 3-inch Army antiaircraft guns were equipped only for indirect fire at aerial targets, and they had no sights or other fire control equipment to facilitate direct sighting by local control.

[14] *Hawaii-Malaya NavOps*, 33.

of the gun until the defenders were in a position which Devereux later described as "a box-shaped thing." Here they continued to hold.

But farther west Japanese troops had reached the south shore road between the mine field generator and Lieutenant Poindexter's small mobile reserve, and by the light from the burning patrol craft Poindexter could see these enemy cross the road and disappear into the brush beyond. The lieutenant was directing machine-gun fire into this brush area when he heard other firing from the direction of Camp One. He left Gunnery Sergeant T. Q. Wade in charge of the reserve force and headed toward the camp. There he found that two large landing craft had grounded on the reef some 30 yards offshore southeast of the camp.[15] Four machine guns from Camp One fired at the barges, but the rounds ricocheted off. This fire evidently discouraged the craft from attempting a landing at this point, however, because they backed off the reef and nosed about as if seeking a better site.

While these two boats floundered about in the surf, Lieutenant Poindexter formed two teams of grenadiers to move down to the water's edge and lob hand grenades into the barges. One team consisted of himself and Boatswain's Mate First Class James E. Barnes, while the other consisted of Mess Sergeant Gerald Carr, and a civilian, R. R. Rutledge, who had served as an Army officer in France during World War I. The machine guns suspended fire, and the grenadiers attacked. By this time the Japanese had landed a short distance farther east, and Boatswain's Mate Barnes managed to throw at least one grenade inside a barge just as the enemy debarkation commenced. The explosion inflicted heavy casualties, but some 75 to 100 enemy splashed ashore and entered the underbrush east of Camp One. This heavy growth north of the road soon became a sort of no man's land into which the Japanese continued to infiltrate and expand their beachhead.

All this Poindexter managed to report back to Major Devereux in a final message from Camp One before wire communication was lost. But shortly after this a panicky civilian who had managed to pick his way through the brush from Camp One to Devereux's command post brought in reports—totally untrue—that Camp One was being overrun and that he had seen Japanese troops bayoneting the machine gunners of the mobile reserve.

The loss of communications was not localized at Camp One. Devereux's command post had lost contact with Lieutenant Hanna, the VMF–211 infantrymen, the CP of the .50 caliber machine-gun battery near the airstrip, and Battery A at Peacock Point. The tactical line to Wilkes Island also went out at this time, but the "J"-line, which lay north of the airfield, still linked the defense battalion CP with that of Captain Platt on Wilkes. Nobody knows exactly what caused this communications failure, but the nature of the trouble suggests that it might have been caused by a single break. The location of this major break, if there was one, must have been near the battalion command post where lines were close together. But all Wake survivors hold the opinion that the Japanese cut the lines; and they point out that the Wilkes "J"-line did not go out until some time after this failure of the line south of the field. Thus defenders believe that the lines were being

[15] *Lewis.*

cut as the enemy attack progressed inland. Devereux tried to contact his Wake Island positions by radio, but this inter-island net never had been reliable, and the sets characteristically failed to function that morning. There were no communications personnel in the command post to trouble-shoot lines,[16] and for the remainder of the battle Devereux had no communications with his defensive line along Wake's south coast.

It was now obvious to Devereux at his "blacked-out" CP that fights were in progress all along the west leg of Wake Island, and that he must sacrifice a defensive unit from some other area to reinforce his effort in the critical zone. Lieutenant Lewis' Battery E in the crotch of Wake Island could not be disbanded. It was the only completely equipped and up-to-strength[17] antiaircraft battery on the atoll. Battery B's 5-inch guns on Peale Island also should remain manned for possible missions against enemy ships. But Captain Godbold's Battery D might be used as infantry. This unit had two 3-inch guns, but no fire control equipment; and Peale Island did not appear to be threatened. Two officers and some 40 men from this battery became the atoll reserve, and at 0300 Major Devereux ordered Godbold to send one gun section (about nine men) from this reserve force to the aid of Hanna's untrained crew. Corporal Leon Graves brought these men around from Peale Island in a truck driven by one of the civilians, and Major Devereux directed them toward Hanna's position.

By this time the Japanese had made at least two penetrations through the Marine "line" along the south edge of Wake Island, and it is possible that the enemy was also landing inside the lagoon in rubber boats. Several defenders speak of seeing red flares rising from within the lagoon, and after the surrender Marine working parties found rubber boats on these interior beaches. If these landings were taking place, it is probable that they occurred on the north beaches of Wake Island's west leg.[18] From such sites the men landing in rubber boats could join up with those landing on the south beaches.

Captain Godbold on Peale Island was one of the defenders who saw these red flares inside the lagoon, and he had Battery B at Toki Point send a two-man patrol down the interior coast of that island to investigate. Godbold then sent a three-man patrol from his own battery down the outer coast of Peale. These two patrols met at the southeast end of the island without encountering any enemy. The captain then established a three-man outpost to cover the bridge between Peale and Wake Islands.

[16] MSgt R. M. June reply to HistSec, HQMC, questionnaire, 11Mar47, 2.

[17] "Up-to-strength" was a relative term on Wake. The 1941 tables of organization allowed such batteries two officers and 75 enlisted men. At this time Battery E had two officers and about 50 men.

[18] Although Japanese sources do not mention such interior landings the evidence to support them is generally convincing. The rubber boats did not enter the lagoon through the channel between Wilkes and Wake Island, because this narrow channel was covered throughout the battle. Devereux surmises that the boats entered the lagoon at the open end of the atoll between Kuku and Toki Points. Such landings would explain, without necessarily ruling out infiltration, the early presence of individual Japanese at various points along the lagoon shore. One Japanese source does mention that red rocket flares were to be used as a signal that "We have succeeded in landing." *Hawaii-Malaya NavOps*, 33.

But interior landings or no, the Wake defenders had their hands full. Japanese cruisers began to bombard the atoll's main island at about 0330. The landings continued in spite of the fact that Battery E now fired air bursts over the beaches, and enemy infantry continued to press closer to Hanna's 3-inch gun south of the airstrip. The VMF–211 troops still held, but their partial perimeter was being compressed tighter and tighter around the gun. This action was now little more than a battle for preservation of the weapon and the Marines involved. Major Putnam's men could not check the Japanese penetration farther to the west, nor could they prevent the enemy from moving behind them or into the island triangle above Peacock Point. And the Japanese wanted to concentrate in this triangle so they could launch an attack up the island's east leg. The VMF–211 troops could only hope to cling to the slight hillock of their position, and stay there as long as possible.[19]

Meanwhile Coporal Graves and his detached gun squad from Battery D were trying to reach Hanna's 3-inch gun. Devereux had told them to detruck at the road junction some 600 yards below the end of the strip and west of Peacock Point. From there they were to go through the underbrush to the gun position. But the squad detrucked considerably short of this junction—probably less than 200 yards below the strip. From there the men struck out through the brush in the general direction of the Hanna-VMF–211 area. They were soon stopped, however, by enemy machine-gun and small-arms fire which killed one Marine and pinned down the others.[20] After a time Graves withdrew his unit northward toward the command post where it later participated in defensive efforts commanded by Major Potter.

It is not clear what sort of an enemy force Corporal Graves encountered in the Peacock triangle, or how the Japanese got there. There are indications that a landing might have been made in that area, with barges coming in on the south coast between Battery A on Peacock Point and the Hanna-VMF–211 position. Devereux said after the war that he believed a landing took place at this point, but the matter never has been confirmed. Some Japanese accounts, including those of Captain Koyama and a correspondent,[21] mention a landing "near the southeast tip of Wake" to overrun Battery A, which must have been remembered from the action of 11 December—especially by men in the cruiser *Yubari*. But Captain Koyama also insisted that the Japanese made only two barge landings with a total of four barges. And these are accounted for by the landings near Camp One and at Wilkes Island. Discounting a third barge landing, this force must have been built up by the rubber boat landings within the lagoon, or by wholesale infiltration behind the position held by Putnam and Hanna.

But at any rate, Devereux soon learned from Corporal Graves that there was an

[19] *Kinney Interview*. At about this time Maj Putnam, already wounded, told his men, "This is as far as we go." Six hours later, when the island fell, they still held.

[20] Col Devereux suggests that some of the machine-gun fire which swept through the Peacock triangle might have come from friendly weapons. He points out that Marines had .30 or .50 caliber machine gun sections on virtually the entire perimeter of the triangle.

[21] *Capture of Wake*, II, 372.

enemy force in the triangle. And from there the Japanese threatened the entire eastern rim of the atoll. Battery E was now receiving light mortar and long-range machine-gun fire, and Battery A likewise began to receive enemy mortar fire.[22] In the face of this, Captain Barninger armed his range section with two .30 caliber machine guns and formed an infantry outpost line on the high ground behind his 5-inch guns.

The enemy fire against Battery E seemed to come from the thick brush on the other side of an inlet southwest of the battery position. Direct 3-inch fire into this area silenced one automatic weapon, but this did not seem to ease the pressure much. Lieutenant Lewis then sent a patrol of approximately 10 men under Sergeant Raymon Gragg to investigate. Gragg went out to the road north of the airstrip, and patrolled to the southwest along this road. Within 50 yards of the battery Gragg's patrol ran into heavy Japanese fire which forced the Marines to deploy. Answering the enemy fire, the patrol held here until the surrender.

At about 0430 the .50 caliber machine-gun section at the east end of the airstrip, still in communication with Devereux, reported that the Japanese were attacking in company strength up the road from Peacock Point. Corporal Winford J. McAnally, in charge of the six Marines and three civilian volunteers at this position, was trying to hold the Japanese south of the airstrip. Fire from the .50 caliber gun position had halted the enemy advance along the road, but the enemy now attempted to infiltrate around the strong point. McAnally contacted another machine gun position some 400 yards to the south on the atoll's east shore, and these two sections alternated in firing at the enemy.

This Japanese force probably was the *Itaya unit*. This reinforced company evidently infiltrated behind the Putnam-Hanna position at the 3-inch gun while the *Uchida company* remained near the beach to deal with that weapon which had fired on the patrol craft. The enemy at first had trouble locating McAnally's gun section, but before daylight they were all around the position. McAnally's men continued to hold, however, and the corporal's reports to Devereux gave the major his only link with the action south of the command post.

By 0500, a half hour before dawn, it was clear that the Japanese had a superior force firmly established on the atoll, and that the enemy was free to infiltrate almost at will around and between the isolated positions of the defenders. At this time Commander Cunningham sent his message, "Enemy on island issue in doubt."[23] But actually there was little doubt, although the defenders were far from admitting it at that point. The 500 defenders on the atoll were then outnumbered approximately two to one by the enemy; but what was worse, the Marines had their mission and their own atoll against them. "Little Wake" has a vulnerable shore line about 21 miles in length, and the defenders had insufficient men to man even a minimum of their antiaircraft and seacoast guns and at the same time the beach defenses. On Wake Island alone, nearly

[22] Barninger's report also speaks of occasional fire from "a small field piece." Lt Col C. A. *Barninger Rcpt*, 6. This may have been a 70mm howitzer of the type organic to Japanese infantry battalions.

[23] *Wake File.*

half of the 200 defenders had to remain at Batteries A and E, and another 15 Marines manned machine guns and searchlights at Heel Point where the island's east leg crooks toward Camp Two. Thus only about 85 men could oppose the enemy landing force, and half of these were machine-gun crewmen. Marines serving as riflemen against the enemy on Wake Island numbered between 40 and 45.

When Cunningham sent his message, Major Putnam still held the position around Hanna's gun, but the Japanese now had these Marines surrounded. Here the defenders had sustained a number of casualties, including the death of Captain Elrod.[24] Camp One also continued to hold, and Lieutenant Poindexter had rejoined his small mobile reserve force near the road junction west of the airstrip. There at first dawn the Marines were taken under heavy fire from the brush off their left (north) flank. Light mortar shells began to fall around the gun positions, and one of the .30 caliber weapons was put out of action. In danger of being outflanked here, Poindexter ordered a withdrawal to Camp One where he would consolidate for his final stand. The unit displaced by section in 150-yard bounds, and arrived at Camp One shortly after daybreak. There Poindexter organized his defenders along a semi-circular line facing seaward and to the southeast. In this line he had about 40 riflemen and 10 machine guns.

Lieutenant Kliewer and his three Marines had survived the night beside the mine field generator, but a heavy Japanese attack threatened them just before dawn. This was repulsed by close-in fighting with submachine guns and grenades, but the Japanese came back again at dawn. This time the enemy made a shouting bayonet charge against the Marines, but again Kliewer and his men, now aided by the .50 caliber machine guns at the west end of the airstrip, managed to halt the attack.

Enemy pressure against McAnally's machine-gun position east of the airstrip also increased during the hour before dawn. The Marine strong point now had been located, and the defenders were under heavy attack by small-arms fire and grenades. McAnally's gunners already had broken up a number of enemy rushes by holding their fire until it would be most effective, but these 10 men could not expect to hold out for long against the reinforced company opposing them.

This was clear also to Devereux at the command post, and at 0530 he directed Major Potter, who until now had assisted in the command post, to assemble every headquarters, service, supply, or casual Marine in the command post area, including Corporal Graves' detached squad from Battery D, and to form a final defensive line approximately 100 yards south of the command post. This force of approximately 40 men would take up positions astride the north-south main road. Devereux then telephoned Captain Godbold on Peale and directed him to truck his entire Battery D, plus the few .50 caliber gunners, to the battalion command post for immediate employment as infantry. With these orders, the atoll's final reserve, totalling approximately 30 officers and men, was committed.

By 0600 McAnally's position was nearly surrounded and under continual infan-

[24] The Japanese sustained at least 62 casualties trying to take this gun position, and one of them was Lt Uchida, the company commander.

try[25] attack. Unless he was to lose these personnel, Major Devereux had no alternative but to pull them back. This he did shortly after 0600, when McAnally was ordered to withdraw northward and join Major Potter's line.

After Captain Godbold's reserve force left Peale Island, First Lieutenant Kessler became commander there since his Battery B was all that remained on the island. In the light of dawn Kessler could see on Wilkes a line of Japanese flags across the center of the island, and a large enemy flag waving from the approximate position of Marine Gunner McKinstry's provisional Battery F. This he reported to Major Devereux, who could only conclude that Wilkes, which had been silent since about 0300, had shared the fate which now appeared imminent for Wake Island.

Above the brush and slight rise of ground which topped the west leg of Wake Island, Kessler could also see the superstructure of *Patrol Craft 32*. Observing that the ship appeared intact, Kessler at 0600 requested Major Devereux's permission to fire on it. Although the line of fire and intervening partial mask[26] made this hazardous, the request was approved, and on the first salvo Battery B shot away the ship's mainmast. As a result of subsequent adjustment, the ship was hit about the superstructure and upper hull. It finally caught fire.

Meanwhile Second Lieutenant Robert W. Greeley had reached the command post with the first 20 men from Battery D. There Major Potter, trying to piece out and extend his sparse line to the right (west), directed that the reinforcements be placed on that flank around the edge of the clearing originally dozed out to prepare for the north-south leg of the airstrip. Captain Godbold arrived with other reinforcements at about 0700,[27] and these men joined those already emplaced by Greeley. This line now turned to the right (north) to refuse the flank along the edge of the clearing. Potter's line, now containing about the equivalent of a rifle platoon, thus extended from near the beach, across the two roads south of the CP, and to the airstrip clearing where it made a northward turn. Thus a gap of approximately 450 yards existed between the skirmish line and the shore of the lagoon. This gap the defenders would attempt to cover by fire.

By daylight the atoll defenders could make out the large task force which supported the landing operations. There were then 13 ships at various positions around the island (the four cruisers of *Cruiser Division 6* were out of sight east of Wake), and all of them were keeping a safe distance from the 5-inch shore batteries. "Due to the previous experience with the American shore batteries," a senior Japanese officer said later, "we did

[25] Among the Japanese killed before his position at about this time were two flame-thrower operators. Although use of flame is not recorded, this was perhaps the earliest tactical employment of this weapon in the Pacific island war.

[26] Kessler had to train the flat-trajectory 5''/51's so as to fire across Flipper Point and just clear the crest of Wake Island. The line of fire passed less than 250 yards to the west of Lt Kliewer's position at the generator.

[27] Like so many other questions as to exact times of events during the defense of Wake, this one is subject to conflicting testimony. Maj Potter states that Godbold reached the command post at 0600. Godbold gives 0715 as the time. Other sources, while not giving times, put the arrival of Battery D shortly after daybreak. Balancing all accounts against each other, 0700 or shortly before seems to be the best synthesis.

not want to come within range."[28] In spite of this caution, however, the destroyer *Mutsuki* began at 0654 to lead two other destroyers (probably the *Yayoi* and the *Mochizuki*) in toward Wilkes Island, possibly to fire shore bombardment missions. But fire from Battery B on Peale quickly hit the *Mutsuki*, and the formation turned and scurried away. Observers believed that Kessler's fire also hit the second destroyer in the formation after the ships turned, and that the *Mutsuki* later sank, but Japanese records do not confirm this.

Farther to the northwest the two Japanese carriers *Soryu* and *Hiryu* headed upwind with their cruiser and destroyer escort,[29] and at 0700 "the gallant Eagles of the Navy," as the Japanese Naval Information Service styled them, approached Wake at 6,000 feet. As the formation wheeled over Peacock Point, Battery E opened fire in what was the last antiaircraft action of the battle. The formation split into component groups according to mission, and commenced a methodical and unceasing series of air strikes in close support of the special landing force. Wilkes, Peale, and Wake Island were hit repeatedly.

Dive bombers now battered Kessler's 5-inch gun battery on Peale Island, and the air-supported enemy troops began to move rapidly against Major Potter's line south of the defense battalion command post. Battery E also was being attacked by the carrier planes, and Devereux believed that Wilkes Island and most of the west leg of Wake Island already had fallen to the Japanese. Shortly after 0700 the major called Commander Cunningham and told him that organized resistance could not last much longer. Was there a chance that the relief expedition might yet arrive? No chance at all, Cunningham said.

And there was no chance, although up until two and a half hours earlier than this the men in Task Force 14 thought there might be. During the night of 22–23 December (21–22 December at Hawaii) Vice Admiral William S. Pye, acting CinCPac pending the arrival of Admiral Nimitz from Washington, had been in conference about this relief force for Wake. The officers at Pearl Harbor knew that Admiral Fletcher was running a close race, and they were concerned that this task force would be lost, along with Wake, if the race ended in a dead heat. At one point they decided to order the *Tangier* to make a solitary dash for the atoll while the *Saratoga*, then some 425 miles short of Wake, launched Major McCaul's planes from that distance. But this order was countermanded before Fletcher could begin its execution; and finally at 0811 Hawaiian time (some two and a half hours before Wake was to surrender) Task Force 14 was recalled. The force spent most of the day refueling its cruisers, and that night retired toward Midway.

Commander Cunningham and Major Devereux decided that additional defense efforts would be hopeless, and the island commander made the decision to surrender. Acting on these orders, Devereux carried a white flag out of his CP at 0730 and walked south along the shore road to meet the Japanese.

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[28] *Hawaii-Malaya NavOps*, 29.

[29] In addition to the two carriers, this task force was composed of the new 12,000-ton heavy cruisers *Chikuma* and *Tone*, and six destroyers, two of which were *Tanikaze* and *Urakaze*.

THE FIGHT ON WILKES ISLAND

"At this time," states a Japanese report, "Wilkes Island was the scene of a fierce and desperate battle."[30] Here at 0245 Gunner McKinstry fired the first shots in the battle of Wake when he saw barges approaching to land at a point just west of the new channel. After this first burst from gun 10 (see Wilkes map) a Marine searchlight flashed on to reveal the 100 men of the *Takano unit* coming through the surf and onto the beach. But by this time the Wilkes detachment was completely disposed to repel a landing, thanks to the earlier and erroneous report of a landing on Peale Island. (See Map 6)

When that false alarm sounded, Captain Platt ordered two Battery L gun sections (each about the size of a rifle squad) to positions on the lagoon side of the island, and pulled the remainder of Battery L personnel back to defensive positions along the road near the new channel. Extra ammunition and grenades were issued, and the Battery F personnel were instructed to fire against any landing for as long as they could, and then to pull back across the road to join the men of Battery L. Thus the Battery L position, commanded by Lieutenant McAlister, was well prepared when the Japanese barges hit the beach near that defensive site.

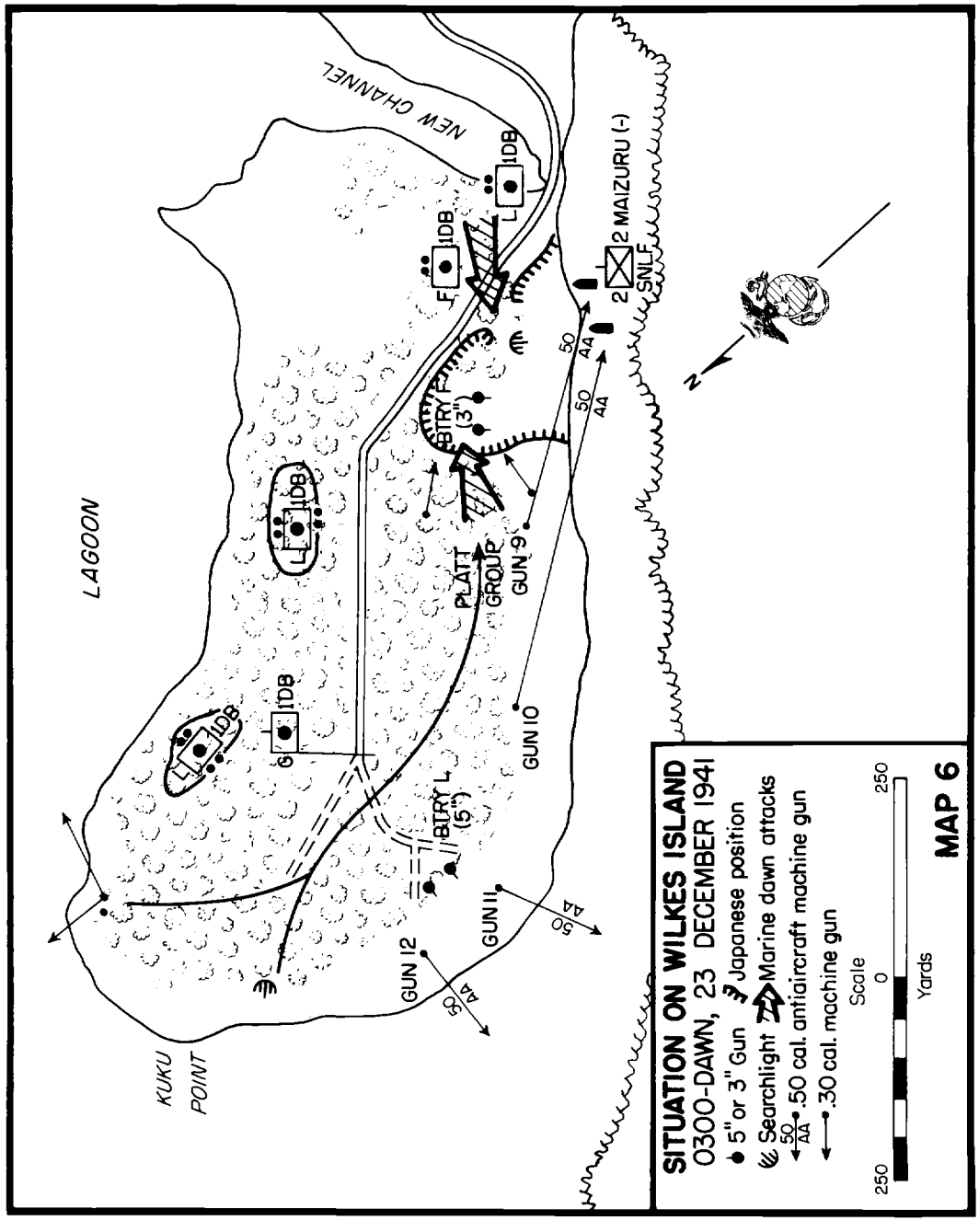
The searchlight beam lasted for only a minute in the face of the Japanese attack, but McKinstry continued to fire at the landing craft he could see on the beach, and McAlister sent two men down toward the beach to hurl grenades at the Japanese. Enemy fire killed one of these men and wounded the other. Battery F then began to fire into the landing area with their 3-inch shells cut for muzzle-burst, but the attack came on up the beach so rapidly that these guns soon were unable to depress sufficiently to engage the Japanese.

Gunner McKinstry had crossed to the 3-inch guns to direct this air-burst fire, but it soon became apparent to him that the position could not hold. The enemy continued to expand their beachhead, and a strong force near Battery F was throwing grenades in among the Americans. The gunner removed the firing locks from the 3-inch guns, and then directed his men to retire to their designated infantry position on the right flank of McAlister's line beyond the road. Japanese tried to pursue this withdrawal, but McKinstry's men drove them back.

McKinstry and McAlister now were in good position to protect themselves and to guard the road to Wake Island, but there was little to stop the Japanese from moving farther west and spreading out over all of Wilkes Island unless fire from machine-guns 9 and 10 could aid the main defense line to keep the enemy bottled up around the abandoned 3-inch guns. Gun 9 was already delivering flanking fire against these Japanese, and the enemy advance was temporarily checked. The Takano troops now turned their attacks to knock out this machine gun, but its position was well prepared and well camouflaged. Although nearly surrounded, the Marines on this gun continued to hold and to repel attacks which kept up until dawn.

Meanwhile Captain Platt, in his CP behind the former positions of Battery L, was having the same sort of communications trouble that plagued Major Devereux on Wake Island. By 0300 the captain had lost contact with every position except that

[30] *Hawaii-Malaya NavOps*, 29.


LAGOON
NEW CHANNEL
KUKU POINT
1DB
BTRY L (5")
BTRY F (3")
PLATT GROUP
GUN 9
GUN 10
GUN 11
GUN 12
50 AA
44
2 MAIZURU (-)
2 SNLF
N
SITUATION ON WILKES ISLAND
0300-DAWN, 23 DECEMBER 1941
5" or 3" Gun
Japanese position
Searchlight
Marine dawn attacks
.50 cal. antiaircraft machine gun
.30 cal. machine gun
Scale
0
250
250
Yards
MAP 6

of the beleaguered men on Gun 9. From them he learned that the enemy were building up pressure to extend their beachhead farther inland. At about 0400 Captain Platt moved out to the Gun 11 position near the beach, and from there he crept through the brush to a vantage point east of Gun 10. It was now about 0500, and Platt decided quickly that he must mount a counterattack if the Japanese were to be prevented from staging daylight attacks which would enable them to overrun Gun 9 and spread out into the interior of the island.

He hurried back to Gun 10 and ordered Platoon Sergeant Raymond L. Coulson to round up the .30 caliber machine-gun crews and searchlight personnel from Kuku Point, plus anyone else he could lay hold of, and assemble them at Gun 10 for the counterattack. In 25 minutes Coulson was back with the two machine-gun crews and eight riflemen—about a squad in all. These men the captain led back through the underbrush toward the Japanese.

The Marines crept and crawled to within 50 yards of the Japanese. Platt then placed his two machine guns on each flank of his line of departure, and ordered the gunners to fire their short bursts close to the ground so this fire would not endanger the McAlister and McKinstry line farther to the east. By this time dawn was breaking, and Platt quickly drew up his skirmish line of eight Marines. He signalled the machine guns to open fire, and then he led his riflemen forward against the 100 men of the *Takano unit.*

At about this time on the other side of the Japanese position, Lieutenant McAlister had observed a six-man enemy patrol moving toward his Marines, and he ordered his line to open fire. One enemy was killed and the others sought cover behind a large coral rock near the beach. McAlister's men continued to fire into this area to keep the Japanese pinned down while Gunner McKinstry and Private First Class William C. Halstead worked their way out to this rock and finished off the rest of the patrol.

Meanwhile Platt's counterattack had surprised the other flank of the penetration, and the Japanese at that point were in trouble. Obviously they had expected no opposition from the west, and their light machine guns had been sighted for fire to the east against the McAlister-McKinstry line. Platt's attack carried the Marines into the former position of Battery F, and the Japanese were driven back toward the beach and toward the Marine defense line by the island road.

It was now daylight, and McAlister could see this Marine attack on the far side of the Japanese position. When his men finished mopping up the enemy around the rock near the beach, the lieutenant gathered 24 Marines into a skirmish line of his own and launched a counterattack from his side of the battlefield. The men of the *Takano landing force* panicked. Organized resistance evaporated in front of the two Marine attacks, and the forces of Platt and McAlister soon joined. About 30 Japanese fled to shelter around the Marine searchlight truck southeast of the Battery F guns, and there the Marines under Platt and McAlister flushed them out and killed them. The *Takano unit* on Wilkes had been destroyed.

McAlister counted four officer and 90 enlisted bodies while his men policed up the battlefield and removed the flags the Japanese had placed in the ground to mark

their front lines. Two wounded Japanese were captured. The other four Japanese—if the *Takano unit* actually included an even 100—were not accounted for. Marines found several small maps of Wake in the effects of the dead Japanese, and Marine positions were marked accurately on these maps. The photographic missions over the atoll had obviously paid off well.

By 0800 Captain Platt had reorganized his Wilkes defenders, and he again tried to establish contact with Wake Island. He was able to contact the motor pool at Camp One where Poindexter's force had managed to hold throughout the night, but he could not get through to Devereux at the defense battalion CP. At about noon the men on Wilkes observed Japanese landing boats headed for Wake Island and several ships approaching toward Wilkes channel. Platt ordered McAlister to get his 5-inch guns into action against these vessels, but the gun crews found that the weapons were beyond use. The training mechanism on Gun 1 was wrecked, and the Gun 2 recoil cylinder had been riddled by bomb fragments.

Wilkes had been under attack by the dive bombers which had arrived over the atoll at about 0700, but sign language interrogation of the wounded prisoners indicated that the enemy planned no more landings against this section of the atoll. Platt decided to go find the enemy. He ordered McAlister, McKinstry, and Coulson to round up all the men and to strike out east toward the old channel. Dive bombers attacked this route column as it moved down the island, and a destroyer moved in to open up from 2,000 yards. One Marine, Private First Class Robert L. Stevens, was killed by this bombing, but the action against the Marines suddenly ceased.

Platt moved the men forward again in a dispersed formation, and near the old channel he saw three men advancing from the other direction. Two were obviously Marines, Platt decided, but the figure in the rear was a Japanese officer armed with a large sword. The captain moved forward and soon recognized Major Devereux who told him that the island had been surrendered. It was then shortly after 1330. Platt's force did not get a chance to help in the fighting on Wake Island, but it had given such a good account of itself in earlier action that a Japanese officer was prompted later to make this estimate of the Wilkes fighting: "In general, that part of the operation was not successful." [31]

THE SURRENDER AND AFTER

Prior to moving down the road toward the Japanese, who were still receiving determined small-arms fire from the few Marines south of the command post, Major Devereux passed word of the surrender to all units in communication with his command post. These were Batteries A and E on Wake Island, Battery B on Peale, and other small detachments including those at Heel Point, and some of the .50 caliber positions on Wake Island. Communications with Battery A had been restored at about daybreak. All units were ordered to destroy their materiel as best they could prior to actual surrender.

These instructions were carried out with all possible thoroughness. At Battery E an attempt was made to damage the 3-inch antiaircraft guns by stuffing blankets into the muzzles and then firing a round or two. When this failed to produce appreciable

[31] *Capture of Wake*, II, 372.

results, the firing locks were removed and smashed, and grenades were rolled down the muzzles to explode inside and damage the rifling. All electrical fire control data receivers were smashed, electric cables chopped up, and the battery commander fired twenty rounds of .45 caliber ammunition through the delicate optical and electro-mechanical parts of the height finder and director. After completing these measures, Lieutenant Lewis assembled the men of Battery E and marched them under a white flag to the battalion command post.

At Battery A, the 5-inch firing locks were broken and buried, and all gun telescopes smashed. The range keeper was damaged beyond repair. After that a white flag was run up, and Lieutenant Barninger ordered his men to eat as much as they could hold. He then held his men on the position to await arrival of the Japanese. Elsewhere, the hard-pressed riflemen stripped the bolts from their rifles and flung them into the brush.

It was after 0800 before all this had been attended to, and the rifle fire of Potter's line was still covering the final operations of the command post. Major Devereux then tried to contact the Marine aid station located some 300 yards south of the CP. He believed that the Japanese advance must have reached this point, and he wanted to instruct the battalion surgeon to contact the Japanese. But there was no response from the aid station, and it became apparent that a surrender party must go forward from the CP. Major Devereux and Sergeant Donald Malleck, who carried a white rag tied to a mop-handle, then made their way down the road toward the fighting. At the Marine line Devereux ordered Potter's men to hold their fire, and he and Malleck walked on toward the Japanese.

Near the hospital Devereux and the sergeant were halted by a Japanese rifleman who motioned for them to throw down their arms and helmets. Then the soldier took them to the hospital where the Japanese already were in charge. They had killed one patient and wounded another while capturing the hospital, and now they had all the patients outside trussed up with telephone wire. Commander Cunningham arrived by truck while Devereux was explaining his mission to an English-speaking Japanese officer, and the Marine major turned over his surrender duties to the island commander. A Japanese officer then escorted Devereux and Malleck forward to pass the surrender order to Marine units on the west leg of Wake Island and on Wilkes Island.

They found the VMF–211 riflemen and Hanna's unit still holding around the 3-inch gun in spite of continuing efforts by the Japanese. The Japanese, unable to advance, had taken up positions behind nearby plane revetments, and the fighting here was a deadlock. Captain Tharin was the only officer unwounded in the Marine position, and he was directing the action when Major Devereux contacted him at 0930. There were now but 10 Marines surviving, and nine of them were wounded.

At 1014 Devereux reached Lieutenant Kliewer and his three men beside the mine field generator. These men had been trying since 0900 to coax some life into the gasoline generator so they could blow up the airfield, but the rain during the night had given it a thorough soaking and it would not operate. "Don't surrender, lieutenant," one of the men told Kliewer. "Marines never surrender. It's a hoax."

"It was a difficult thing to do," Kliewer reported later, "but we tore down our guns and turned ourselves over." [32]

Shortly before 1115 the surrender party, now west of the airstrip, came upon the rear of a Japanese skirmish line facing westward and evidently engaged in a fire fight against Marines in the brush beyond the west end of the strip. After some confusion during which the Japanese fired on the surrender group, Major Devereux passed through the lines and made contact with Lieutenant Poindexter. The lieutenant's mobile reserves, in ignorance of the surrender, had retaken the ground between Camp One and the west end of the strip during the morning's fighting. When Devereux came upon Poindexter, the 30–odd Marines in this force had just completed a steady eastward advance from Camp One, fighting their way forward along the beach with the edge of the brush to their left. Special naval landing force troops were in the thick brush to the north, but they had not attempted to attack the Marines. Divided into three 10-man squads, Poindexter's improvised platoon had advanced with two squads in assault, one on the seaward side of the road and the other north of the road. The support squad protected the exposed left flank by advancing in rear of the left assault squad. During the advance, particularly as he neared the airfield and retraced by daylight the scenes of his fighting during the night, Lieutenant Poindexter counted approximately 80 enemy dead.

After assuring the surrender of this force, Major Devereux led the Japanese toward Camp One, still held by machine-gun sections of Poindexter's group. There the Marine prisoners watched a Japanese climb up the water tank and cut down the American flag which had been flying there throughout the battle.

The surrender group, followed by approximately 30 Japanese, then crossed Wilkes channel by launch. No Marines were to be seen when Devereux landed at about 1300, and the party began walking cautiously westward. At this time the enemy destroyer began firing on the island, but this fire was soon checked by a Japanese signalman who flagged the ship to silence. At 1330, almost midway between the new and old channels on Wilkes, Major Devereux saw "a few grubby, dirty men who came out of the brush with their rifles ready . . ." These were Platt's Marines who had annihilated the *Takano landing party* on Wilkes and now were advancing eastward to repel what they thought was still another landing. Thus all resistance had been silenced, and Wake now was in Japanese hands.

[32] 1stLt D. D. *Kliewer Rept.*

Conclusions

The defense of Wake was the first wartime operation conducted by the Marine Corps in defense of an advanced naval base. It was also the first combat test of the Marine defense battalion, although the strength of the Wake detachment was greatly reduced. The main reason for the fall of Wake seems obvious. The enemy in greatly superior strength, supported by ample surface and air forces, was able to effect a lodgement on the atoll and then to apply his ground superiority to overwhelm the dispersed defenders in detail. Had it been possible for U. S. surface forces to intervene, or for substantial reinforcements to reach Wake, the results might have been entirely different. But military lessons of some value still may be drawn by a survey of certain specific reasons why the defense was handicapped. These factors were interacting, of course. No single one of them can be clearly isolated within the framework of events which brought military defeat to the atoll.

Japanese procedure for the reduction and seizure of Wake, if not executed with the skill or standards that U. S. forces later attained, was nevertheless orthodox. It consisted essentially of two phases, the preliminary bombardment and the assault landing. The enemy's first landing plan underestimated the amount of preparation required, and he paid for this miscalculation in the defeat of 11 December. But this he corrected in his second attempt.

Lack of radar and other early-warning equipment severely handicapped Marines during preliminary aerial bombardment, and it would be difficult to overstate the seriousness of this shortage. It enabled the initial Japanese raid to destroy over half of VMF–211's fighters on the ground, and the same lack of early warning continued to hamper the effectiveness of those fighter planes which remained in operation. Thus the VMF–211 pilots never had a chance to plan effective fighter interception against the enemy bombers, and the Japanese could proceed quite methodically with their program for the aerial softening of Wake.

This lack of early warning and the shortage of aircraft can be lumped together as matters of air defense, and air defense depends upon coordinated employment of fighter aircraft, antiaircraft artillery, and the essential warning systems. But on Wake only the antiaircraft artillery—undermanned and partially operational though it was—could be considered fully and consistently effective, and nobody ever expected antiaircraft weapons alone to defend an advanced naval base against air attack. They were there to provide close-in protection to the aviation facilities; the planes were to be the important factor in keeping the enemy away from an island base. Determination and stubbornness of the fighter pilots could not avert the final outcome. The fliers could only exact from the enemy a maximum cost for every bomb dropped. This was

done until the last Grumman was destroyed by massed enemy fighters on 22 December. After that, landing operations against Wake could proceed.

Once the ground combat began, the fundamental weakness of the defense battalion concept as it then existed became starkly underlined. The unit had no infantry component to act as an effective mobile reserve. Most garrison personnel were tied to weapons and battery positions, and Major Devereux could muster only a fraction of his manpower against the invaders even after enemy intentions became apparent. On Wake Island, for example, only about 85 of 200 Marines were readily available to check the assault landing of a thousand Japanese. Militarily speaking, there is something pathetic in the spectacle of Lieutenant Poindexter and his "mobile reserve" of eight men and four machine guns dashing by truck from one threatened point to another in the face of such fantastic odds.

True, at that time trained infantry was almost as scarce as radar. But the fault lay in the defense battalion tables of organization. Later this omission was corrected, and Midway had both infantry and light tanks. Had even one Marine infantry company reinforced with tanks been on Wake, it is possible that the garrison might have thrown the Japanese back into the sea. This is borne out by what happened on Wilkes Island, where Captain Platt was able to annihilate twice his numbers of the enemy by shrewd, coordinated counter-attack. And after daylight on Wake Island, Poindexter, with the makeshift defenders of Camp One added to his "mobile reserve," had assumed the offensive, driven back the Japanese to his front, and regained most of the ground given up during the confused hours of darkness.

After the Japanese had landed in force on the south coast of Wake Island, it appears that the coast artillery and antiaircraft missions of Batteries B and D, respectively, had become of secondary importance in light of the serious enemy ground threat. The military reader might wonder why all available personnel from Batteries B and D, with whom Devereux was still in communication, were not early in the battle brought down to the vicinity of the airfield and employed, together with such few other available Marines, as a mobile reserve to counterattack the main Japanese beachhead. This was partially accomplished at 0530 on the final morning when Captain Godbold was directed to bring the personnel of his battery (D) to the command post for employment as infantry. By this time, however, it was too late for such a small number to influence the outcome of the battle. In this connection, Major Devereux later pointed out that because of the partial failure of communications he never had anything like a clear picture of the situation during the final Japanese attack. For several hours he was in doubt as to the location of the main enemy landing and hence did not consider himself justified in stripping Peale Island of all defenders.

As alluded to above, another major lesson to be derived from this phase of the operation was a re-emphasis of Admiral Mahan's famous dictum that "Communications dominate war." The partial failure of communications, which occurred shortly after the Japanese landing, isolated the defense detachment commander from most of his subordinate units then in action. As a result he not only lost control

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over much of the battle, but he also—and perhaps more important to this case—became unavoidably deceived as to the progress of the situation. In ignorance of what happened on Wilkes or at Camp One, he surmised that all was lost in those areas. Buried telephone lines and reliable field radios would have prevented this failure of communication, and the surrender decision would not have been made at that particular stage of the action. The Wake garrison, however, had neither the personnel to dig by hand, nor the machinery to dig by mechanical means, the many miles of ditches which would have been necessary to bury the telephone lines.

Perhaps one of the fundamental reasons for the state of the Wake defenses stemmed from the fact that base development had consistently received priority over defense preparations. That the defensive installations were in as good a condition as they were when the Japanese struck may be credited to the tremendous efforts of the small Marine garrison.

All things taken into account, however, the decision to surrender Wake was reasonable, especially when considered in light of the civilian situation and the fact that relief was no longer in prospect. Marines who fought through the Pacific campaigns would later see many examples of a totally unreasoning enemy who never surrendered but was always defeated. At the same time, insensibly, some might come to believe that unyielding refusal to surrender was the proper role of a defender. Of course this was neither true nor logical. Wake had exacted a full and more than honorable toll from the Japanese, but its defensive resources had been exhausted.

No fighter aircraft remained. Only one antiaircraft battery was effectively operational. Enemy dive bombers on 23 December had completely disabled one 5-inch battery (Wilkes) and largely destroyed the fire control instruments of the remaining two. Without airplanes, fire control instruments, radar, spare parts, and personnel to bring the defense to full strength Wake could not carry on. The only answer was surrender. This took place fifteen days after the initial attack, and it was eleven hours after the fighting commenced on shore before Wilkes Island surrendered.

During this period the Marines sustained almost 20 per cent casualties, but they exacted a heavy toll from the Japanese. Nearly 500 enemy had been lost in the abortive landing attempt of 11 December, the defenders on Wilkes Island accounted for nearly 100 in their defeat of the *Takano unit*, and Poindexter counted approximately 80 enemy bodies during his morning attack from Camp One. Give the Hanna–VMF–211 position credit for at least 20 more kills, and this would bring the Wake total to 700 enemy. Others must have lost their lives on Wake Island landing beaches and elsewhere on the island, although the figure probably would not be great. But in earlier action the atoll antiaircraft and fighter plane fire had downed 21 enemy aircraft and claimed credit for damaging another 11.[1]

Based on this record, Major Putnam's final VMF–211 report of 21 December would truthfully state that "All hands have behaved splendidly and held up in a manner of which the Marine Corps may well tell."

[1] A Japanese source says that 51 planes, in addition to those shot down, were damaged by flak over Wake. *Nakamura Notebook.*

PART IV

Marines in the Philippines

China and Luzon

In the first few months after Pearl Harbor, it seemed that nothing could stop the Japanese. One by one, the western outposts in the Far East were overwhelmed. Allied ground troops, in desperately unequal contests, were forced to retreat, fight, and retreat again; at sea and in the air the pitifully few ships and planes which had survived the initial onslaught were hoarded against the surety of further enemy advances. A grim holding battle was joined along a line protecting Australia and New Zealand and their South Pacific lifeline to the States. Yet, despite its strategic importance, this vital defensive action gave first place in the news to the outcome of a hopeless struggle hundreds of miles behind the enemy's forward positions.

For almost five months, two names—Bataan and Corregidor—dominated the headlines, taking fire in the minds of the Allied peoples as symbols of courage and devotion to duty. To the Japanese, who realized that they could starve out the embattled defenders at little cost to themselves, it became imperative that the issue be decided forthwith in battle. On the eve of the all-out offensive that brought the end on Bataan, the Japanese commander, addressing his combat leaders, clearly stated the importance of the isolated strong points in the eyes of the world:

> The operations in the Bataan Peninsula and the Corregidor Fortress are not merely a local operation of the Great East Asia War. This battle has lasted for about three months as compared with our speedy victories in Malaya, Dutch East Indies, and other areas in the Philippines. As the Anti-Axis powers propagandize about this battle as being a uniquely hopeful battle and the first step toward eventual victory, the rest of the world has concentrated upon the progress of the battle tactics on this small peninsula. Hence, the victories of these operations do not only mean the suppression of the Philippines, but will also have a bearing upon the English and Americans and their attitude toward continuing the war.[1]

Lieutenant General Masaharu Homma was right: the outcome of the battle did have a direct bearing on the Allied attitude toward vigorous pursuit of the war. Perhaps in no instance since the defense of the Alamo stirred Americans in another century did an unsuccessful battle carry within its waging and its ending the source of so much national pride and dedication.

THE SHADOW OF WAR[2]

On 26 July 1941, shortly after Japan occupied military bases in Indo-China, President Roosevelt authorized the mobilization of the Philippine Army. The War

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[1] HistSec, G–2, GHQ, FEC, Japanese Studies in WWII No. 1, 14th Army Ops, 2 vols., n. d. (located at OCMH), 141–142, hereinafter cited as *14th Army Rept.*

[2] Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from Adm T. C. Hart, Narrative of Events, AsFlt Leading up to War and From 8Dec41 to 5Feb42, written before 11Jun42 (located at NHD), hereinafter cited as *Hart Narrative;* Adm T. C. Hart, Supplementary Narrative to *Hart Narrative,* 8Oct46 (located at NHD); Gen J. C. Wainwright, Rept of Ops of

Department, which had requested this move, followed through with a directive organizing a new command, USAFFE (United States Army Forces in the Far East), which included all American Army and Commonwealth troops in the Philippines. To head USAFFE the Army called out of retirement its former chief of staff, General MacArthur, who had served as Military Advisor to the Commonwealth Government since 1935. He was given rank as a lieutenant general and with characteristic energy tackled the enormous job of putting the Philippines into a state of readiness against attack.

The bulk of USAFFE's troop strength was drawn from the Philippine Army which was, in July 1941, an army in name only. It consisted of the islands' police force, the 6,000-man Philippine Constabulary, a token air force and inshore naval patrol, and ten territorial reserve divisions. Since the start of the Commonwealth's defense training program in 1936 about 110,000 Filipinos had received a few months of basic military instruction, but most of these reservists had no experience with crew-served weapons and only rudimentary knowledge of their own pieces. The divisions had never operated as such in field maneuvers and were scantily provided with arms and equipment. In order to mold an effective fighting force from the Philippine Army, MacArthur needed just about everything in the military supply catalogs, but most of all he needed time—time for training, time for materiel and men to reach the Philippines from the United States.

The instructors and cadres needed for training the Philippine Army were drawn from the Constabulary and the regular Army units available to USAFFE. Most of the 22,000 U. S. Army troops in the islands were serving in Coast Artillery regiments, the Army Air Corps, or the Philippine Division, sole regular infantry division in the islands. Over half of these men were members of crack Philippine Scout units.[3] The regulars suffered, too, from a general lack of up-to-date weapons and equipment,[4] but they were well trained to use what they had.

The War Department supported MacArthur's requests for additional troops and supplies to the fullest extent possible in light of the country's world-wide commitments; USAFFE received priority in almost every man power and materiel category. More than 7,000 men, mostly members of service and air units, and the

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USAFFE and USFIP in the Philippine Islands 1941–42, 10Aug46 (located at TAGO), hereinafter cited as *USAFFE-USFIP Rept;* Annex VIII to *USAFFE-USFIP Rept,* MajGen G. F. Moore, Rept of CA Comd and the Harbor Defenses of Manila and Subic Bay, 19Feb41–6May42, 15Dec45 (located at TAGO), hereinafter cited as *Moore Rept;* BriGen S. L. Howard, "Report of the operation, employment and supply of the old 4th Marines from September, 1941 to the surrender of Corregidor, May 6, 1942," 26Sep45, hereinafter cited as *Howard Rept; 14th Army Rept;* L. Morton, *The Fall of the Philippines—United States Army in World War II* (Washington: OCMH, DA, 1953), hereinafter cited as *Fall of the Philippines; Rising Sun in the Pacific.*

[3] The Philippine Scouts was a U. S. Army organization in which the enlisted men were native Filipinos and most of the officers were Americans. The Scouts had and merited a high reputation for fielding units with good morale, excellent discipline, and a consistently superior level of combat readiness.

[4] At the outbreak of the war, "the Philippine Division, less than two-thirds strength, had only three (3) new 37mm automatic firing cannon, three (3) 81mm mortars per infantry regiment and no (0) 60mm mortars . . ." *USAFFE-USFIP Rept,* 94.

major portion of the United States' heavy bomber strength reached the Philippines prior to the outbreak of war. Much more was promised and planned, but the Japanese surprise attack effectively cut off the flow of reinforcement. It also forced a revision of MacArthur's defensive strategy.

In view of his healthy reinforcement prospects, the USAFFE commander had adopted an aggressive defense plan that conceded the enemy nothing. He did not expect the Japanese to attack before April 1942 [5] and by that time he considered that his air and ground strength would be such that he could successfully hold his position against any attacking force. He was confident that the Philippine Army, when adequately trained and equipped, would be a match for the Japanese.

The Commander in Chief of the U. S. Navy's Asiatic Fleet (CinCAF), Admiral Thomas C. Hart, was in substantial agreement with MacArthur's philosophy of an aggressive defense. He recommended that in the event of war his fleet units remain based at Manila Bay and fight the Japanese in Philippine waters. The Navy Department, however, adhered to its long-established plan that the major ships of the fleet would retire to the south at the imminence of war, to a base of operations in the Netherlands East Indies or Malaya, where they could cooperate with Allied naval units.[6] Hart's slim collection of cruisers, destroyers, submarines, and auxiliaries, was certainly no match for the Japanese fleet, nor was it intended to be. The U. S. Pacific Fleet, based at Pearl Harbor, was the American striking force, and war plans envisaged its fighting advance to the Philippines if the Japanese attacked.

The Asiatic Fleet's major shore installations were located at Olongapo on Subic Bay and at Mariveles and Cavite within Manila Bay. Since denial of Manila Bay to the enemy was a key point in war planning, the activities of the 16th Naval District (Rear Admiral Francis W. Rockwell), the shore establishment supporting the Asiatic Fleet, were closely coordinated with USAFFE's defensive preparations. Contact mines were laid to connect with controlled mine fields of the Army's harbor defenses, completely closing Manila Bay. On Corregidor, site of the prospective command post for the defense of Luzon, protected installations for naval headquarters, a radio intercept station, and a torpedo replenishment depot were prepared and equipped. Large quantities of fuel and ammunition stored at Cavite were moved to dumps away from the naval base to lessen their vulnerability to bombing. (See Maps 7 and 8, Map Section)

If the Japanese attacked, the most dangerously exposed elements of the Asiatic Fleet were those stationed in China: seven Yangtze River gunboats; Colonel Samuel L. Howard's 4th Marine Regiment at Shanghai; and the Marine embassy guard detachments at Peiping and Tientsin.

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[5] Gen J. C. Wainwright, *General Wainwright's Story*, R. Considine, ed. (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1946), 13, hereinafter cited as *Wainwright's Story*.

[6] After the war, in supplementary comments to his original report, Adm Hart agreed that the Navy Dept decision was the best that could have been made considering the situation at the time. He added, however, that if his original proposal of 27Oct41 to continue to base at Manila had been turned down sooner he might well have made a better disposition of his fleet units; he had acted on the assumption that his proposal would be accepted until it was disapproved in late November.

Admiral Hart had begun making informal proposals that his China forces be withdrawn early in 1941, and after July, when he was "entirely convinced that the war was coming," [7] he followed up with emphatic official recommendations that his men be gotten out before it was too late. Japanese war preparations were so evident by 1 September that the American Consul-General at Shanghai, the commander of the Yangtze Patrol, and Colonel Howard jointly recommended that all naval forces in China be withdrawn. Hart naturally concurred and further recommended to the Navy Department that the troops be evacuated in late September when the transport *Henderson* made a routine call on Chinese ports to pick up short-timers and other returnees.

Hart's request was turned down as far as withdrawal on the *Henderson* was concerned. He was told, however, that joint State-Navy conferences would be held within a couple of weeks time to consider the problem of a withdrawal and its effect on negotiations for a settlement of Japanese-American differences. Despite CinCAF's protest that this "was not a question that could be delayed for weeks but must be acted upon immediately," [8] he did not receive permission to withdraw the gunboats and the Marines until 10 November, "embarrassingly late" as he later noted.[9] Five of the gunboats were able to reach Manila without hinderance once clearance to leave was given.[10]

Two President liners, the *Madison* and the *Harrison*, were chartered to transport the Marines, attached naval personnel, and their supplies and equipment; provision was also made to evacuate some American civilians from Shanghai on the same ships. After it reached the Philippines and unloaded, the *Harrison* was to return to North China and pick up the embassy guards and their gear at Chinwangtao. All signs pointed to the necessity for haste in the withdrawal.

The Japanese were replacing their seasoned troops around Shanghai with recruits, and large numbers of special armored landing barges which had previously been seen near the city disappeared; intelligence pointed to movement southward of both veteran units and landing craft. Intelligence also indicated that the Japanese Army was eager to take over the International Settlement, by force if necessary, and that it was only being restrained by the Nipponese Navy's desire for an "incident" which would seem to justify such action. Several attempts were made to manufacture incidents, but the Marines refused to knuckle under to the pressure, and Colonel Howard initiated prompt action which kept the American defense sector clear. A copy of a Japanese warning order was obtained which stated that "in the event of war the 4th Marines would attempt to break through [our] lines;" [11] ample evidence of this belief was seen in the increase in size and number of the patrols in the city and in the construc-

[7] Adm T. C. Hart ltr to CMC, 10Oct56, hereinafter cited as *Hart Comments*.

[8] Quoted in *Howard Rept*, 1.

[9] *Hart Narrative*, 29.

[10] The smallest of the gunboats, the *Wake*, was stripped and left at Shanghai to be used as a station ship and radio outlet for the remaining Americans; it was captured on 8 December. The *Tutuila* at Chungking was turned over to the Chinese Nationalist Government under lend-lease since it could not get downstream through the Japanese blockade.

[11] *Howard Rept*, 3.

tion of concrete blockhouses on all roads leading out of Shanghai.

Both the *Madison* and *Harrison* needed to be converted to troop use after their arrival at Shanghai, and the first ship was not ready until 27 November. By 1600 that date, the *Madison* with half the regiment and half its equipment on board sailed for Olongapo. While this forward echelon, the 2d Battalion and half of the Regimental Headquarters and Service Companies, was loading out, a message was received from CinCAF to expedite the evacuation. Even though the conversion work on the *Harrison* was three days short of completion, the decision was made to clear Shanghai the following day with the rest of the regiment and its remaining equipment.

Despite the short notice and the harassing tactics of the Japanese,[12] the Regimental R–4 and Quartermaster, Major Reginald H. Ridgely, Jr., was able to load all organizational gear, over 500 tons, by 1300 on the 28th. At 0900 that morning, the regiment assembled at the 1st Battalion's billet, formed up behind its band, and marched down Bubbling Well-Nanking Roads to the President Line's dock on the Bund. Thousands of cheering people lined the route of march, and the banks of the river were alive with flag-waving Chinese as a power lighter took the Marines downstream to their ship. At 1400 the *Harrison* weighed anchor and sailed for the Philippines, marking the end of a colorful era in Marine annals.

As soon as the *Harrison* cleared the Whangpoo River, machine guns were broken out and manned for antiaircraft defense, and blackout regulations were put into effect.[13] Flights of Japanese aircraft checked the liner regularly as it moved out into the China Sea, but there were no incidents, and contact was made on the 29th with submarine escorts dispatched by Admiral Hart. On 30 November and 1 December the two transports arrived at Olongapo where the troops disembarked. Only a few supplies were unloaded at the naval station, ostensively because CinCAF had issued orders that the ships must pass through the mine field into Manila Bay by nightfall on the day of arrival. Actually, Admiral Hart had given oral orders to his staff that the Marines were to be landed with field equipment only, because it was his intention that:

> . . . they would get into the field, near Olongapo, as soon as they could. We [Hart and his staff] all knew that they had been cooped up in Shanghai through all those years where conditions for any sort of field training were very poor—and we thought that not much time remained.[14]

While the regiment's heavy equipment was unloaded at Manila and trucked to Olongapo, the *Harrison* was readied for a return voyage to pick up the Marines from Peiping and Tientsin. It was al-

[12] "All supplies had to pass through the Japanese Sector on the way to the Customs dock. About 3:00 p.m. November 27th they closed the Garden Bridge over Soochow Creek to traffic and our trucks were delayed nearly an hour before contact could be made with the Japanese Admiral to get this bridge reopened to traffic. Customs officials ostensibly at the instigation of the Japanese were insistent that our supplies pass through the Custom House, but we ignored such orders and loaded them on lighters. The Japanese instigated three strikes during the night by the laborers loading the lighters." *Ibid.*, 4.

[13] No special defensive arrangements were made by the 4th Mar elements on the *President Madison*. CWO C. R. Jackson ltr to CMC, 10Oct56, hereinafter cited as *Jackson*.

[14] *Hart Comments*.

ready too late, however, to rescue the North China Marines. The Japanese war plans had been activated, and the carrier task force that would strike Pearl Harbor was at sea en route to its target. The troops, ships, and planes that would be sent against the Philippines were concentrated at Formosa, the Ryukyus, and the Palaus with orders to begin their attack on X-Day—8 December 1941 (Manila Time).[15]

8 DECEMBER 1941[16]

When the dawn of the first day of the Pacific War reached the China Coast, the attack on Pearl Harbor was over and the troops in the Philippines had been alerted to their danger. At the Chinwangtao docks, Second Lieutenant Richard M. Huizenga was supervising the stockpiling of supplies for the expected arrival of the *President Harrison.* A truck driver brought him word that the radio at his railhead, Camp Holcomb, was full of news of Pearl Harbor. Although the Japanese made half-hearted attempts to stop him on his three-mile drive back to the camp, Huizenga was able to get through to his unit. He found the 21 Marines of the loading detail surrounded, at a respectful distance, by a cordon of Japanese troops. The men, under Chief Marine Gunner William A. Lee, were setting up a strong point amid the boxcars of supplies; two machine guns and several Tommy guns and BARs had already been broken out of their cosmoline packing. Despite their desperate situation the Marines were ready to fight.

Huizenga and a Japanese captain held an armed parley where the lieutenant was given time to communicate to his superior at Tientsin, Major Luther A. Brown, the enemy's demand that he surrender the detachment. Orders soon came back to offer no resistance and the Marines were stripped of their weapons. Later in the day they were returned under Japanese guard to the Marine barracks at Tientsin.[17]

The situation of the detachments at Tientsin and Peiping was similar to that of the one at Camp Holcomb; Japanese troops surrounded their barracks in strength and demanded their surrender. Since the embassy guard was not required to maintain a continuous watch on CinCAF's command radio circuit,[18] the first word that the senior Marine officer, Colonel William W. Ashurst, had of the outbreak of hostilities came from the Japanese. He was given till noon to make his decision whether to fight or not and was allowed to communicate by radio with CinCAF and by phone with Major Brown. In a sense Ashurst had been given a Hobson's choice: he could surrender or he could let his troops, fewer than 200 officers and men, be overwhelmed. If discipline and spirit would have won the day,

[15] *Campaigns of the Pacific War,* 26–27, 50.

[16] Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *Hart Narrative; USAFFE-USFIP Rept; 14th Army Rept; Howard Rept;* 4th Mar Jnl and Rec of Events, 8Dec41–2May42, hereinafter cited as *4th Mar Jnl;* Capt A. F. Metze Rept to CMC, "Surrender of U. S. Marine Forces in North China," 23Aug42; *Fall of the Philippines; Rising Sun in the Pacific.*

[17] MIS, G–2, WD, Escape Rept No. 665, Capt R. M. Huizenga, 12Jul45.

[18] LtCol W. T. Clement Rept to CMC, "Dispositions and employment of U. S. Marines on the Asiatic Station during the initial stages of the war," 6Apr42, hereinafter cited as *Clement Rept.*

Ashurst could have opened fire on the besiegers—his men had already demonstrated at Camp Holcomb that they were willing to take on hopeless odds. But there was no purpose in fighting if the end result could only be useless bloodshed.

In the absence of instructions to the contrary, Colonel Ashurst took the only sensible course open to him and ordered his men to lay down their arms. A strong possibility existed that if no resistance was offered the embassy guards would be considered part of the diplomatic entourage, entitled to repatriation. As the initial treatment of the Marines was relatively mild and they repeatedly received informal assurances from the Japanese that they would be exchanged, few attempted escape. When these rumors proved false, the opportunity had passed.[19]

By the time Ashurst's report of his decision to surrender reached Hart in Manila, the Philippines were in the thick of the war. The first news of the Japanese attack was picked up at 0257 by a radio operator at CinCAF Headquarters who, recognizing the technique of the sender, vouched for the reliability of the now famous message, "Air raid on Pearl Harbor. This is no drill." [20] The duty officer, Marine Lieutenant Colonel William T. Clement of Hart's staff, immediately notified the admiral who sent a war alert to all fleet units. Minutes later, by a combination of intercepted official and commercial broadcasts and the spreading of the word by the first agencies notified, the report had reached all major USAFFE headquarters.

A cacophony of sound broke the stillness at Olongapo when the alert reached the naval base at 0350; the bugler of the guard blew "Call to Arms;" the steam whistle at the power plant blasted a recall signal to PBY crewmen; and the ship's bell at the main gate clanged continuously.[21] Companies immediately mustered in front of their wooden barracks and in the streets of tent areas and were put to work setting up machine guns for antiaircraft defense and digging individual protective holes. Colonel Howard initiated the first moves in what was to be a hectic period of redisposing, reorganizing, and reinforcing the regiment which lasted throughout the month of December.

When the 4th Marines arrived from Shanghai its strength stood at 44 officers and warrant officers and 728 enlisted men; organic naval medical personnel raised the total strength to 804. The regiment "had been permitted to dwindle by attrition" [22] in China so that it consisted only of Headquarters Company, Service Company, and two battalions—the battalions short one of their rifle companies and the companies each short one of their three rifle platoons. By utilizing the members of the regimental band and absorbing the Marine Barracks Detachment, Olongapo, Howard was able to form some of the missing pla-

[19] Huizenga, *op. cit.;* MIS, G–2, WD, Escape Rept No. 666, Capt J. D. McBrayer, Jr., 12Jul45.

[20] *Clement Rept.*

[21] Capt F. W. Ferguson, Personal Experiences 8Dec41–6May42, n. d., hereinafter cited as *Ferguson.*

[22] *Howard Rept,* 8. As the threat of war with Japan increased, Adm Hart initiated a policy of withholding replacements from Marine units in China. Almost all of the men held back were assigned to the 1st SepMarBn at Cavite. Hart felt that if by some mischance he was unable to get the 4th Mar out of China he "could at least stop sending any more Marines there until someone bawled us out most vociferously. They never did." *Hart Comments.*

toons. In keeping with previous orders from Admiral Rockwell, he sent the 1st Battalion by tug, lighter, and truck to Mariveles to relieve the Marine detachment there. The men of the Mariveles guard had been taken from the other major Marine unit in the Philippines, the 1st Separate Marine Battalion at Cavite.

The battalion was organized to function either as an antiaircraft or an infantry unit, but its primary mission was the antiaircraft defense of the naval installations in the Cavite-Sangley Point area. Its firing batteries, 3-inch guns and .50 caliber machine guns, had been on partial alert since 14 October and as the threat of war grew stronger the guns and their crews had reached a high degree of readiness. On 4 December, the battalion's one long range radar set and the necessary operating personnel were assigned to USAFFE's control and moved to a position on the west coast where the radar could scan the approaches to Manila from the south; [23] the set was one of two operating in the Philippines on 8 December. When the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel John P. Adams, passed the word of the Pearl Harbor attack there was little left to be done but to "cut fuzes, going into the last stage of readiness." [24] But the Marine guns were not to see action. The Japanese reserved their first day of attack for their primary target, MacArthur's Far East Air Force (FEAF). And when that day was over, the Japanese figured that their "supremacy, at least in the air, was established conclusively." [25]

Except for 16 B–17's at Del Monte on Mindanao, the bulk of FEAF's strength in first-line planes was stationed at fields in central Luzon. Dawn of the 8th found most of these planes airborne, waiting to engage or evade Japanese attackers. But the land-based naval fighters and bombers of the Japanese *Eleventh Air Fleet*, charged with making the main air assault, did not appear at dawn. The enemy plan had called for such a surprise attack, timed to coincide with the start of operations in Malaya and at Pearl Harbor, but thick clouds and heavy fog delayed the take-off from Formosa of the major attack formations. It was noon before the enemy planes could reach their targets, Luzon's airfields, and the Japanese pilots very reasonably assumed that with the loss of surprise they would be met in force.[26]

But this was not to be, for "shortly after 1130 all American aircraft in the Philippines, with the exception of one or two planes, were on the ground." [27] The fighters were refueling after their fruitless morning patrols or awaiting a warning of imminent attack; the bombers were arming for an offensive mission against Formosa. By an incredible chain of circumstances, compounded by poor communications, a woefully inadequate air warning system, and a generous amount

[23] LtCol H. L. Davis ltr to CMC, 310ct56.

[24] 1stLt W. F. Hogaboom, Personal Experiences 140ct41–6May42, n. d., 1–2, hereinafter cited as *Hogaboom*. This narrative was published in the *MC Gazette*, April 1946, under the title, "Action Report—Bataan."

[25] HistSec, Japanese Research Div, GHQ, FEC, Japanese Studies in WWII No. 11, Philippines AirOpsRec, 1Feb52, 7, hereinafter cited as *Philippines AirOpsRec*.

[26] *Ibid*.

[27] W. S. Craven and J. L. Cate (eds.), *Plans and Early Operations, January 1939 to August 1942—The Army Air Forces in World War II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 209.

of pure bad luck, the Japanese were given a sitting target. After a day of violent action, when all concerned tried to make up for what hindsight calls mistakes, the strength of the FEAF had been reduced by half. The way was open for the Japanese to begin landing operations.[28]

The enemy had in fact made his first landing by the time of the main air attacks. A small force came ashore at dawn on Batan Island midway between Luzon and Formosa and immediately began work to set up an air base on an already existing strip to accommodate the relatively short-ranged Army fighters. The next day elements of two fighter regiments of the Japanese *5th Air Group* were using the field and flying reconnaissance and strike missions over northern Luzon, site of the next planned landings.

THE FIRST DAYS [29]

On 9 December only a few enemy bombers attacked, but these planes filtering through the early morning darkness reached Nichols Field outside Manila unscathed where their bombs increased the damage and added to the toll of American planes. An all-out attack on the Manila Bay area had been planned for the second day of the war, but fog over Formosa prevented the take-off. Although the weather was again bad on the 10th, the enemy naval squadrons were on their way to their targets by midmorning.[30] Radar and ground observers spotted the incoming flights, but to no avail. When the outnumbered American interceptors rose to greet the raiders, the enemy fighters swarmed all over them, not giving as good as they got, but more than making up for their losses whenever they downed one of the few remaining planes of FEAF.

The Japanese bomber groups were heading for the best protected area in the Philippines; almost all of the antiaircraft units in USAFFE were concentrated near Manila. But the gunners below had an insoluble problem; they had plenty of ammunition, but very little of it was fused so that it could reach above 24,000 feet. After a few false starts the enemy learned that they could bomb from heights of 25,000 feet with relative impunity. There was a limited supply of mechanically-fused ammunition which could reach 30,000 feet, but there were not enough such rounds to materially increase antiaircraft defenses.

The gunners of the 1st Separate Marine Battalion at Cavite scored a kill on 10 December when they downed an overeager dive bomber that strayed from the pack over Nichols Field, lured by the target of two PBY's taking off from Sangley Point. But that was the end of it. The three-inch batteries turned back the first flight of bombers, which came in too low, but all subsequent flights approaching the

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[28] See Craven and Cate, *op. cit.*, 201–213 and *Fall of the Philippines*, 79–90 for an examination of the contradictory statements and chronology of misadventures that marked what may well have been the blackest day in the history of the Army Air Corps.

[29] Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *Hart Narrative; USAFFE-USFIP Rept; Moore Rept;* RAdm F. W. Rockwell, Narrative of Naval Activities in the Luzon Area, 1Dec41–19Mar42, 1Aug42 (located at NHD), hereinafter cited as *Rockwell Narrative; Howard Rept; 4th Mar Jnl; 14th Army Rept; Fall of the Philippines; Rising Sun in the Pacific.*

[30] HistSec, G–2, GHQ, FEC, Japanese Studies in WWII No. 13, NavOps in the Invasion of the Philippines, 15May46 (located at OCMH), 7.

naval base stayed well out of range and the gunners were helpless spectators to the destruction that followed.[31]

Stick after stick of bombs rained down on the naval base as successive flights of bombers criss-crossed the area laying a perceptible pattern. Fires sprang up everywhere as small dumps of ammunition and gasoline were hit and the old town of Cavite was soon a raging mass of flames. All the ships that could possibly get away from the yard headed out into the bay, but the bombers caught and fatally damaged a submarine and a mine sweeper. Everyone feared that the ammunition depot, which still had large quantities of powder and ammunition in it, would be hit, but the bombers missed their most promising target. Still, the fires being blown toward the depot from Cavite might touch it off,[32] and the rescue parties searching amid the flaming ruins for the hundreds of civilian casualties were in constant danger. Long after the raid was over, into the night and the early morning of the next day, the fires raged and Admiral Rockwell ordered all personnel to evacuate the base. Only a small group of men from Lieutenant Colonel Adams' battalion and a few Manila firemen remained. These volunteers localized the fire and were able to save the commissary stores; the ammunition depot soon was out of danger.[33]

Admiral Hart had watched the air attack from the roof of his headquarters building in Manila and had seen the end of Cavite as a base of operations. Rockwell's damage report confirmed his observations. On the night of the 10th Hart ordered most of the remaining ships of the Asiatic Fleet still in Manila Bay to sail south to comparative safety. The next day he advised the captains of all merchant ships in the bay to get their vessels out while they still could; fortunately, only one merchantman out of 40 was caught by enemy bombers.[34] The strongest element of Hart's fleet, his 29 submarines, continued to operate from the bay for a short while, until Japanese control of the air made this base untenable. By the year's end only the submarine tender *Canopus* and a small collection of yard craft, motor torpedo boats, and auxiliaries remained in Manila's waters.

In the judgment of a naval historian of this period the Asiatic Fleet was "sadly inadequate" and therefore "unable to prevent the enemy from landing wherever he chose, or even to delay his efficient timetable of conquest."[35] Nor were FEAF or the ground troops of USAFFE able to do the job. In some instances there was a temporary delay when planes hit the landing forces, but nowhere were the Japanese stopped and forced to turn back. On 10 December two combat teams from the *2d Formosa Regiment* of the *48th Division* came ashore at Aparri in northern Luzon and at Vigan on the northwest coast. Their mission, which was to secure airfields for use by Army planes, was successful. In a day the Japanese, despite the loss of several ships to American bombers, were firmly established ashore and in practical control of the northern tip of Luzon. The one Philippine Army division in the area, the 11th, was responsible for the de-

[31] *Hogaboom*, 3.

[32] LtCol J. V. Lyon ltr to CMC, 31Oct56.

[33] LtCol J. W. Keene, Narrative and tactical dispositions of the 1st SepMarBn at Cavite, 8–26Dec41, n.d.

[34] *Hart Comments.*

[35] *Rising Sun in the Pacific*, 181.

fense of the island north of Lingayen Gulf and was of necessity spread so thin that it could offer no effective resistance.

The same situation held true in southern Luzon where the defending forces, two Philippine Army divisions, were completely unable to cover all possible landing beaches. On 12 December, when a Japanese convoy carrying the advance assault detachment of the *16th Division*, staged from the Palaus, reached Legaspi in southeastern Luzon, there was nothing to oppose their landing. The troops were ashore, had taken their airfield objective, and were moving north by nightfall. In all there were less than 10,000 enemy troops ashore at this time, but they had behind them the rest of the *Fourteenth Army* and command of the sea and air to insure its arrival on schedule.

The heavy air attacks of the 8th and 10th were only harbingers of further aerial assaults. Reinforced by Army fighters and bombers operating from newly-seized airfields, the naval planes of the Formosa-based *Eleventh Air Fleet* spread out over Luzon seeking new targets. The first turn of Olongapo and the 4th Marines came on 12 December, the day that marked the end of effective U. S. air support.

A flight of Japanese fighters followed the PBY's based at Olongapo into their anchorage after the flying boats had made a fruitless search for a supposed enemy carrier task force. The enemy pilots caught the seaplanes at their moorings and destroyed them all. As the Japanese strafed the naval station Marine machine gunners attempted to bring them down; Colonel Howard noticed that the tracers of Company H's .30's seemed to be "bouncing off these planes indicating sufficient armor plate to prevent penetration." [36] The enemy attacked again on the 13th, this time bombing from altitudes beyond the range of the Marine automatic weapons. The few hits scored were all in the town of Olongapo; there was no damage to the naval station and only a few Marine casualties. The Filipinos who ignored the air raid warning suffered heavily; a bomb hit right in the midst of a large group of townspeople who were "standing under a tree watching the performance," [37] killing 22 and wounding at least as many more. Although alarms were frequent thereafter, the Japanese did not attack again until the 19th and then their aim was bad and they liberally plastered the bay with bombs.

During this period, while the original Japanese landing forces were advancing toward Manila, top-level discussions were held between Hart and MacArthur and their staffs regarding employment of the 4th Marines.[38] On 20 December, MacArthur formally requested that the regiment be assigned to his command "as developments of the Navy plan can make it available." [39] Admiral Hart concurred and directed Howard to report to USAFFE for such employment as Mac-

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[36] *Howard Rept*, 9.

[37] *Jackson.*

[38] Although the war plan for the Philippines had long called for the available Marines to be assigned to the defending ground forces under Army control, USAFFE made no effort in the first few days of the war to contact CinCAF regarding his Marine forces. After a reminder from Hart, "there came back a request to send one battalion into Manila City to guard USAFFE Headquarters. Feeling that it would be a wrong use of the best infantry available, [Hart issued] no order to that effect." *Hart Comments.*

[39] Copy of CG, USAFFE ltr to CinCAF, 20Dec41, in *4th Mar Jnl*, 237; *Clement Rept*, 6.

Arthur might deem necessary in the defense of Luzon.[40] In a covering memo to Rockwell, he pointed out that the assignment of the 4th Marines was the sole commitment that he had made and that he had verbally made it clear that it was his policy that excess naval personnel be organized and equipped and then "fed up into the combat areas on shore with the Fourth Regiment of Marines. A command exercised over them by the Army would normally be via C. O. Fourth Marines." [41]

The Navy Department had directed Hart on his departure from the Philippines to place all naval personnel, munitions, and equipment at the disposal of USAFFE. Rockwell, who was to relieve Hart as senior naval officer in the Philippines, nominally retained independent status. He adhered firmly, however, to the principle of unity of command and cooperated closely with MacArthur's headquarters.

On 22 December, the reinforced Japanese *48th Division* landed in Lingayen Gulf. It was the logical landing point for any force whose objective was Manila, for the gulf stood at the head of a broad valley leading directly to the capital. The landing was expected and it was resisted, but the combined efforts of American air, submarine, and ground forces could not prevent the Japanese from putting their men ashore and effecting a juncture with Vigan-Aparri landing forces which had driven down from the north. Resistance, although sparked by the 26th Cavalry of the Philippine Scouts, was spotty and ineffectual, and the Japanese soon proved that the partially-trained men of the Philippine Army were not yet a match for their troops. Covered by the Scout cavalrymen, the Filipino reservists fell back in disorder to reorganize in positions below the Agno River.

The enemy was ready to drive on Manila from the north.

On the 24th, the last major assault element of the *Fourteenth Army*, the *16th Division* from the Ryukyus, landed at Lamon Bay only 60 miles cross-island from Manila. Here the story was much the same as Lingayen Gulf. The enemy overwhelmed scattered, ill-trained troops and made good his beachhead. The American South Luzon Force began to fight a delaying action along the roads leading to Manila. The decision, however, had already been made to declare the capital an "open city," and the troops were headed for the Bataan Peninsula.

Bataan, northern arm of Manila Bay, had long been considered the ultimate stronghold in a defense of Luzon. While it was held, and with it the fortified islands across the mouth of the bay, no enemy could use the harbor, and it was possible to gain succor from friendly naval forces which might break through a blockade. MacArthur had rejected the concept of a static, last-ditch defense when he took over USAFFE and had expected with the forces underway to him from the States and trained Philippine Army divisions to be able to repulse or contain enemy landing attempts. When the Japanese won

[40] According to the *Hart Narrative*, 45, one plan considered for the employment of the 4th Mar entailed the brigading of the regiment (reinforced by a naval battalion from Mariveles) and a constabulary regiment under a Marine brigade commander. The Marines were to furnish officers and NCO's to the Constabulary unit. Time did not permit the execution of this scheme.

[41] CinCAF memo to ComSixteen, 22Dec41, in *4th Mar Jnl*, 239.

control of the sea and air, however, he lost all chance for successful execution of his orders to "attack and destroy" [42] any landing force, and he was forced to adopt the only course of action that would save his army: a desperation withdrawal to Bataan. He made the fateful decision on 23 December and the following day preparations to effect it were begun.

Basically the withdrawal plan called for Major General Jonathan C. Wainwright's North Luzon Force to fight a series of delaying actions in the central island plain which would allow the South Luzon Force (Major General George M. Parker, Jr.) to reach the peninsula. Then Wainwright's units would pull back to Bataan, join forces with Parker, and stand off the enemy. In the time gained by the delaying actions, USAFFE would make every effort to augment the supplies already gathered in scattered dumps on Bataan with food, ammunition, weapons, and equipment from installations in the Manila area.

The role of the 4th Marines in this plan was laid out for Colonel Howard in a series of conferences which took place in Manila on 24 December. Admiral Hart, who was preparing to leave for Java the following day, informed the Marine commander that the 1st Separate Battalion would be added to his regiment as soon as it could clear Cavite and that he was to report immediately to MacArthur for duty. At USAFFE headquarters, amidst the bustle attendant on its move to Corregidor, Howard got a cordial welcome from his new chief and then received orders to move the 4th to Corregidor and take over its beach defenses. In a meeting with Admiral Rockwell, after he had made a final call on Hart, Howard was told to destroy the Olongapo Naval Station when he pulled out.

Mariveles at the southern tip of Bataan had been designated the assembly area and transshipment point for the Marine units and their supplies. The 1st Battalion had already spent two weeks in bivouac near the base weathering a series of air attacks and furnishing guard details, unloading parties, and dump construction crews. Two men were killed and three wounded on 24 December during a bombing raid that struck shipping in the harbor. It was an inauspicious portent for the reception of the forward echelon of the regiment which left for Mariveles at 2200 that night.

Shortly after the truck convoy had cleared Olongapo, Colonel Howard received warning from naval headquarters of an impending Japanese landing, and "sounds of motors could be distinctly heard from seaward" [43] in Subic Bay. All available men manned beach defense positions, but fortunately the report proved false and the motors turned out to be those of American torpedo boats. Early on Christmas morning a message from Rockwell's new headquarters on Corregidor ordered Howard to expedite evacuation and destruction lest the regiment be cut off by advancing Japanese troops. The Philippine Army's 31st Division had pulled back to Bataan from its coastal positions northwest of Olongapo on the 24th and the Marines' north flank was now open; a threat also existed to seaward, since the Army's coast defense troops were withdrawing from Fort Wint in Subic Bay. Motorcycle patrols ranging north of the base could find no sign of the enemy, however, and the movement of men and

[42] *Wainwright's Story*, 28.

[43] *Howard Rept*, 11.

supplies was completed without undue haste. At 1410 Howard's new CP opened outside Mariveles, and the fate of Olongapo was left in the hands of a demolition detail under Captain (later Major) Francis H. Williams.

Using charges improvised from 300-pound mines, "Williams set out with his demolition gang to do a good job of erasing the Naval Station from the face of the globe." [44] They sank the hull of the old armored cruiser *Rochester* in the bay and blew up or burned everything of value except the barracks which closely bordered the native town.[45] The last supplies were loaded early Christmas evening, and the rear echelon pulled out with darkness.

Christmas also saw the completion of destruction at Cavite where a Marine demolition party from the 1st Separate Battalion blew up or fired all remaining ammunition stocks and destroyed the submarine damaged in the 10 December air raid. The naval radio station near Sangley Point was already a shambles, for in a raid on 19 December enemy bombers leveled the buildings and set afire large quantities of gas and oil scattered in dumps throughout the surrounding area.[46] Lieutenant Colonel Adams received orders on 20 December to evacuate the Cavite area, and for the next few days men and supplies were trucked to Mariveles; the Christmas day demolition detail was the last element to leave.[47]

After darkness fell on 26 December, the first Marines to move to Corregidor, 14 officers and 397 men of Adams' battalion, made the seven and a half mile voyage from Mariveles' docks to North Dock on "The Rock."

THE FORTIFIED ISLANDS [48]

The four islands that guarded the mouth of Manila Bay were fortified in the decade prior to World War I before air power changed the concept of coastal defense. Most of the powerful 14- and 12-inch guns were sited in open emplacements for the purpose of repelling an invasion from the sea. Disarmament treaty obligations and drastically reduced defense expenditures in the period between the wars allowed little concession to be made to the threat of air attack. Some antiaircraft guns were added to the fort's defenses, however, and a start was made toward providing underground bombproof shelters, especially on Corregidor (Fort Mills).

Corregidor was at its closest point just a little over two miles from the tip of Bataan Peninsula. The island was tadpole-shaped, three and a half miles long and one and a half miles wide at its head. This wide area, called Topside, loomed high above the rest of the island, its 500-foot cliffs dropping sharply to a narrow beachline. Most of the coast defense batteries and permanent quarters were located here, and the only access routes to the top from the western shore were two ravines, James and Cheney. East of Topside, along the neck of land that connected the tadpole's head and tail, was Middleside, a plateau which held several more battery positions and permanent buildings. A

[44] *Ferguson*, 3.

[45] The town's natives later burned their own houses and the barracks was consumed in the resulting fire.

[46] *Hogaboom*, 4.

[47] Keene, *op. cit.*, 10.

[48] Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *Moore Rept; Howard Rept; 4th Mar Jnl; Philippine AirOpsRec; Fall of the Philippines.*

third ravine, Ramsay, which led from the southern beaches to Middleside, was a critical defensive point. (See Map 8, Map Section)

A logically-named third distinctive portion of the island, Bottomside, consisted of the low ground occupied by the industrial and dock area and the native town of San Jose. The nerve center of Luzon's defenses was an extensively-tunnelled hill, Malinta Hill, which rose directly east of San Jose. The headquarters of MacArthur, Rockwell, and Major General George F. Moore, commanding the fortified islands, were all eventually located in the tunnels and laterals that spread out beneath the hill. From Malinta the long, low, narrow tail of the island bent away to the east; a light plane landing strip, Kindley Field, had been built along the spine of the tail.

The other three island forts, Hughes, Drum, and Frank, complemented the defenses of Fort Mills, and Marines served as part of the beach defense troops on all but the last named. Caballo Island (Fort Hughes), a quarter-mile square in area, stood less than two miles from Corregidor; its low-lying eastern shore rose abruptly to a 380-foot height which contained most of the battery positions. Four miles south of Caballo was the "concrete battleship," Fort Drum. Tiny El Fraile Island had been razed to water level and on its foundation a steel-reinforced concrete fortress had been erected with sides 25- to 36-feet thick, and a top deck 20-feet deep. Two case-hardened steel gun turrets, each sporting a pair of 14-inch guns, were mounted on the deck and the sides of the fort boasted four 6-inch gun casements. Its garrison could be completely contained within its walls, and "the fort was considered impregnable to enemy attack." [49] The island which seemed most vulnerable to assault was Carabao (Fort Frank) which lay only 500 yards from the shore of Cavite Province. However, since some of its guns were capable of firing inland and most of its shoreline was ringed with precipitous cliffs, the job of taking Fort Frank promised to be quite a task.

General Moore later noted that "the fortresses were not designed to withstand a landing attack from adjacent shores supported by overwhelming artillery emplaced thereon;" [50] and that of his big guns only the turrets of Fort Drum, the 12-inch mortars, and two 12-inch long-range guns were capable of all-round fire. A tabulation of the major coast defense armament of the forts shows:

Type	Number of Guns			
	Mills	Hughes	Drum	Frank
14″ guns	—	2	4	2
12″ guns	8	—	—	—
12″ mortars	10	4	—	8
10″ guns	2	—	—	—
8″ guns	2	—	—	—
6″ guns	5	2	4	—
155mm guns	19	3	—	4
3″ guns	10	2	1	—

The forts had in addition a small number of 75mm beach defense guns. For antiaircraft defense, including tied-in batteries on southern Bataan, there were 17 searchlights, 40 3-inch guns, and 48 .50 caliber machine guns.[51]

Marines from the 1st Separate Battalion were able to add a few .50 caliber

[49] *Moore Rept*, 4.
[50] *Ibid.*, 9.
[51] *Ibid.*, Annex C.

machine guns and a battery of four 3-inch guns taken from Cavite to the antiaircraft defenses, but the primary function of the battalion was now that of infantry. It was reorganized and re-equipped at Mariveles to fill the role of the missing battalion of the 4th Marines; the formal change of title to 3d Battalion, 4th Marines came on 1 January.

With the exception of Batteries A and C and the radar detachment of Adams' battalion which remained on Bataan, the whole of the 4th Marines moved to Corregidor in successive echelons on the nights of 27 and 28 December. Enough rations for 2,000 men for six months, ten units of fire for all weapons, two years supply of summer khaki, and the medicines and equipment to outfit a 100-bed hospital accompanied the move. Fortunately, the Quartermaster, Major Ridgely, dispersed these supplies in small, scattered dumps as they arrived and they emerged relatively unscathed from the first Japanese air raid on Corregidor.

Many of the Marines in the bamboo jungles surrounding Mariveles, who had to shift camp constantly to avoid bombing and sleep "on the ground near a foxhole or some convenient ditch into which [they] could roll in the event of an air attack" [52] looked forward to moving to The Rock. They had "watched the Jap bombers steer clear of its antiaircraft barrages" and it had been pointed out to them "that Corregidor's antiaircraft was so good that the Japs had not even dared to bomb it—yet!" [53] An additional lure of the island to some men was the vision of a Gibraltar, and they talked knowingly of the (nonexistent) intricate underground system of defenses.[54]

At 0800 29 December, Colonel Howard reported to General Moore for orders as Fort Mills' beach defense commander and then started out to make a reconnaissance of the island. His men, temporarily quartered in Middleside Barracks, were startled to hear the air raid sirens sound shortly before noon. No one paid too much attention to them as Corregidor had never been bombed, but soon their trusting attitude changed. "All hell broke loose," and as one 1st Battalion officer described the scene, "there we were—the whole regiment flat on our bellies on the lower deck of Middleside Barracks." [55]

The Japanese planes, 40 bombers of the *5th Air Group* with 19 covering fighters, attacked at 1154. For the next hour a parade of Army aircraft flew the long axis of Corregidor dropping 200- and 500-pound bombs from 18,000 feet, and dive bombers attacked the antiaircraft batteries, strafing as they plunged down. At 1300, the Army planes gave way to the Navy and bombers of the *Eleventh Air Fleet* continued to attack until 1415. None of FEAF's few remaining fighters, which were being saved for vital reconnaissance missions, took to the air, but Corregidor's gunners exacted a good price from the enemy—13 medium bombers fell to the 3-inchers and the .50 calibers shot down four of the dive bombers in a vivid demonstration of the folly of flying within reach of these guns. But the damage done by the enemy was considerable.

[52] Statement of Lt(jg) R. G. Hetherneck in Cdr T. H. Hayes Rept on MedTactics, 4th Regt USMC, 7Dec41–6May42, 15Feb46, 79, hereinafter cited as *Hayes Rept.*

[53] LtCol R. F. Jenkins, Jr., Personal Experiences 28Dec41–6May42, n.d., 1, hereinafter cited as *Jenkins.*

[54] *Ibid.*

[55] *Ibid.*

Almost all of the barracks and headquarters buildings and a good half of the wooden structures on the island were battered, set afire, or destroyed. A thick pall of black smoke and clouds of dust obscured the island from observers on Bataan, and the detail left to load out Marine supplies wondered at the fate of the regiment in the center of this maelstrom.[56] The casualty score was miraculously low, only one man killed and four wounded. With a single exception, bombs used by the Japanese did not penetrate all the way through to the bottom deck of the concrete barracks, but the building, shaken repeatedly by hits and near misses, was a shambles. In all, the island's defenders suffered about 100 casualties, and 29 December marked the end of "normal" above ground living for The Rock's garrison.

As soon as the air raid was over, Howard assigned beach defense sectors to his battalions, and the troops moved out to their new bivouac areas before dark. The 1st Battalion, 20 officers and 367 enlisted men under Lieutenant Colonel Curtis T. Beecher, drew a possible enemy landing point—the East Sector which included Malinta Hill and the island's tail. The beaches of Bottomside and most of Middleside (Middle Sector) up to a line including Morrison Hill and Ramsay Ravine were occupied by Lieutenant Colonel Adams' battalion with 20 officers and 490 men. The defense of the rest of the shoreline of Corregidor was the responsibility of the 2d Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Herman R. Anderson) which mustered 18 officers and 324 enlisted men. A general reserve of 8 officers and 183 men, formed from the Headquarters and Service Companies, commanded by Major Stuart W. King,[57] bivouacked in Government Ravine, on the southern shore of the island below Geary and Crockett Batteries.

Not all of Adams' battalion was assigned to the Middle Sector; besides the units left on Bataan, the 3d Battalion furnished most of the other special detachments. One platoon (1 officer and 28 men) with four .50 caliber machine guns and a second (1 officer and 46 men) with four .30's left for Fort Hughes on the 30th to bolster the antiaircraft and beach defenses; the 2d Battalion added ten men and four more .30 caliber machine guns to the beach defenses on 3 January.[58] Fort Drum got a section of 15 men and two .50's to augment its crew. A third antiaircraft platoon with six .50's (1 officer and 35 men) was directly assigned to Fort Mills' air defenses and attached to a similarly-equipped battery of the 60th Coast Artillery which was emplaced near the Topside parade ground.

By 1 January the pattern had been set for the Marines' duties on Corregidor. The men were digging in, stringing barbed wire, emplacing their 37mm's, mortars, and machine guns, and tying-in for a coordinated and protracted defense. Ahead lay more than four months of waiting and preparation for a battle, months in which more than one survivor likened life on Corregidor to existence in the center of a bull's eye.

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[56] *Ferguson*, 6.

[57] *Howard Rept*, 14 lists Maj (then Capt) Max W. Schaeffer as commander of the regimental reserve at this point; however, the contemporary muster rolls at HQMC and survivors' comments indicate that Maj King held this position until 17Feb42 when Maj Schaeffer took over and King became ExO of the beach defense force at Fort Hughes.

[58] Lyon ltr, *op. cit.*

Bataan Prelude

DRAWING THE BATTLE LINES[1]

The Japanese did not confine their operations in the Philippines to Luzon, but December landings on Mindanao and Jolo Islands were made primarily to secure bases for further attacks against Borneo. Here again the hastily mobilized Philippine Army reservists and Constabulary troopers were no match for the assault forces, and the enemy made good his lodgment. Offensive operations in the south, however, were limited by the fact that General Homma did not have sufficient troops to press a campaign on two fronts. The main strength of the *Fourteenth Army* remained on Luzon to win control of Manila Bay.

The original Japanese operation plan for Luzon had contemplated its occupation by the end of January and had provided for a mop-up force of one division and one brigade with a small air support unit. Shortly after Homma's troops entered Manila on 2 January, he received orders to expedite the withdrawal of the *48th Division* and the *5th Air Group* which were needed to reinforce stepped-up operations against Java and on the Asian mainland. In short return for these troop losses Homma got the *65th Brigade* from Formosa, originally assigned to mop-up and police duties. The brigade, which landed on Lingayen Gulf beaches on 1 January, was selected by Homma as his Bataan assault force and reinforced with an infantry regiment from the *16th Division* and tank, artillery, and service troops from army reserves. (See Map 7, Map Section)

The necessary reorganization of the *65th Brigade* for combat and its movement into jump-off positions gave MacArthur time to establish an initial defense line. On 7 January he reorganized his forces into two corps and a rear area service command. Wainwright was given I Philippine Corps with responsibility for holding the western front, and Parker became II Philippine Corps commander with his troops manning defenses on the Manila Bay side of Bataan. More than 80,000 men were now bottled up on the peninsula and some 50,000 held positions on or near the initial defense line. These were impressive figures, and in paper strength the Bataan defenders outnumbered the *Fourteenth Army* which had about 50,000 troops under its command.

Military superiority depends, however, on many other factors besides relative troop strength. The conglomerate American-Filipino forces, completely cut off from effective relief, had limited supplies of rations, medicines, weapons, ammunition, and equipment. By contrast, the enemy's control of the sea and air gave the Japanese an unmatchable resupply and reinforcement potential. Even when

[1] Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *USAFFE–USFIP Rept; 14th Army Rept; Fall of the Philippines.*

the *Fourteenth Army's* fortunes were at their lowest ebb, the enemy troops could reasonably expect rescue and relief.

On 5 January MacArthur, in a move to conserve dwindling food stocks, had cut all troops on Bataan and the fortified islands to half rations.[2] This order was undoubtedly the most significant given in the campaign. It prolonged the fighting for weeks, until Bataan's defenses eventually collapsed. Men sapped by malnutrition and its attendant diseases, for which there were no medicines, could resist no more.

In launching their initial attack on Bataan the Japanese did not expect that the reinforced *65th Brigade* would have much trouble defeating the American-Filipino forces. The enemy was flushed with his successes and "completely ignorant concerning the terrain of Bataan Peninsula."[3] Homma's intelligence officers had underestimated MacArthur's strength by half, had given their commander a distorted picture of Filipino morale, and had formulated an altogether incorrect estimate of the defensive situation on Bataan. The *Fourteenth Army* staff had:

> . . . optimistically presumed that, considering its position relative to Corregidor Island, the enemy would offer serious resistance at the southern end of the Peninsula with Mariveles as a nucleus, withdrawing later to Corregidor Island. Taking this for granted, the threat of enemy resistance was taken lightly.[4]

Bataan Peninsula was an ideal position from the viewpoint of a force committed to a last-ditch stand. Thirty miles long at its deepest point and 25 miles wide at its base, the peninsula tapered to an average width of 15 miles. Numerous streams, ravines, and gullies cut up the interior and thick jungle growth blanketed everything. A spine of mountains running northwest to southeast split Bataan roughly in half. The dominant features in the north were Mt. Natib (4,222 feet) and its companion Mt. Silanganan (3,620 feet), and in the south, Mt. Bataan (4,700 feet), which commanded the Mariveles area. Although numerous trails crisscrossed the peninsula, only two motor roads existed, one running along the coast and the other over the saddle between the mountain masses. The western coast line was uneven with many promontories formed by mountain ridges; the eastern coast was more regular and open but became hilly and rugged in the south. (See Map 7, Map Section)

The final defense line selected by USAFFE was midway down the peninsula, anchored on the towns of Bagac and Orion, and generally along the trace of the cross-peninsula motor road. It was the necessity of covering the preparation of this area for defense and the need to use the road as a supply route as long as possible that dictated the occupation of the initial defense line. Stretching across the peninsula just above the point where it narrowed, this position had a grave natural weakness. The corps boundary ran along the Natib-Silanganan mountain mass which pierced the defenses and prevented liaison or even contact between Wainwright's and Parker's men. The Japanese attempt to crack this defense line eventually involved landings far behind the front and brought the Marines at Mariveles into action.

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[2] "Actually, the troops on Bataan received about one-third ration." *USAFFE-USFIP Rept*, 42.

[3] *14th Army Rept*, 90.

[4] *Ibid.*, 91.

SYMBOLIC OF JAPANESE SUCCESSES *in the early stages of the war is this photograph taken on Mt. Limay on Bataan during the fighting in the Philippines. (SC 334265)*

THE NAVAL BATTALION [5]

Although the farthest distance from the rear boundaries of the corps areas to the southern shore of Bataan was only ten miles, the defensive problem facing Brigadier General Allan C. McBride's Service Command was acute. With a relatively few men McBride had to guard over 40 miles of rough, jungle-covered coast line against enemy attack. A successful amphibious thrust which cut the vital coastal supply road could mean the prompt end of the battle for Bataan. To protect the east coast he had the newly-organized 2d (Constabulary) Division; on the west coast he had a motley composite force of service troops and planeless pursuit squadrons converted to infantry, backed up by a few elements of the 71st Division and a Constabulary regiment. Responsibility for the security of the naval reservation at Mariveles remained with the Navy.

In order to provide protection for Mariveles and support the Army in the defense of the west coast, Admiral Rockwell on 9 January directed Captain John H. S. Dessez, commander of the section base, to form a naval battalion for ground combat. The senior naval aviator remaining in the Philippines, Commander Francis J. Bridget, was appointed battalion commander and he immediately set about organizing his force. For troops he had about 480 bluejackets including 150 of his own men from Air, Asiatic Fleet, 130 crewmen from the submarine tender *Canopus*, 80 sailors from the Cavite Naval Ammunition Depot, and 120 general duty men from Cavite and Mariveles. He was also assigned approximately 120 Marines, members of Batteries A and C which had remained behind on Bataan under naval control when the rest of the 1st Separate Battalion (now 3/4) had moved to Corregidor.

The men of First Lieutenant William F. Hogaboom's Battery A had originally been slated to provide replacement and relief gun crews for Battery C (First Lieutenant Willard C. Holdredge) whose 3-inch guns were set up in a rice paddy between the town of Mariveles and the section base. But on 5 January Hogaboom had received instructions from a USAFFE staff officer, "approved by naval authorities on the 'Rock'," [6] to move his unit to the site of MacArthur's advance CP on Bataan where the Marines were to furnish the interior guard. This assignment was short-lived, however, since Commander Bridget needed the men to serve as tactical instructors and cadres for the naval battalion, and on 14 January he directed Hogaboom to report back to Mariveles. To replace Battery A, USAFFE detached two officers and 47 men from the 4th Marines [7] and sent them from Corregidor to Bataan where they guarded the advance headquarters until the end of the campaign.

The most serious problem Bridget faced in forming his battalion was the lack of ground combat training of his bluejackets. As the commander of the *Canopus*, naturally an interested spectator, noted:

[5] Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *Rockwell Narrative;* 16th NavDist War Diary, 8Dec41–19Feb42 (located at NHD); *Clement Rept;* Cdr F. J. Bridget Rept to ComSixteen, Action at Longoskawayan Point, 9Feb42 (located at NHD), hereinafter cited as *Bridget Rept;* Capt E. L. Sackett, USN, "History of the USS Canopus," 28Apr47 (located at NHD), hereinafter cited as *Canopus Hist; Hogaboom.*

[6] *Hogaboom*, 5.

[7] *4th Mar Jnl*, 268.

. . . perhaps two-thirds of the sailors knew which end of the rifle should be presented to the enemy, and had even practiced on a target range, but field training was practically a closed book to them. The experienced Marines were spread thinly throughout each company in hope that through precept and example, their qualities would be assimilated by the rest.[8]

Even after the formation of the naval battalion, the primary responsibility for antiaircraft defense of Mariveles still rested with the Marine batteries and only a relatively few men, mostly NCO's, could be spared to help train the bluejacket companies. Holdredge's 3-inchers required at least skeleton crews and Hogaboom's unit, after its return from USAFFE control, was directed to mount and man nine .50 caliber machine-gun posts in the hills around the harbor. Therefore, in both batteries the majority of men available for ground combat were sailors; Battery A joined one officer and 65 bluejackets on 16–17 January and a Navy officer and 40 men joined Holdredge's battery on the 18th and 19th.[9] Throughout the naval battalion, training was confined to fundamentals as Bridget strove to qualify his men as infantry. As was the case so often in the Philippines, the time for testing the combat readiness of the jury-rigged battalion came all too soon.

LONGOSKAWAYAN POINT[10]

In opening his atack on Bataan, General Homma committed the main strength of the *65th Brigade* along the front of Parker's II Corps, figuring that the more open terrain along the east coast gave him a greater opportunity to exploit successes. By 11 January the Japanese had developed and fixed Parker's defenses and were probing for weak spots preparatory to an all-out assault. It was inevitable that they found the open and highly vulnerable left flank. By 22 January Parker's position along the slopes of Mt. Natib had been turned and all reserves with the exception of one regiment had been committed to contain the penetration. In order to prevent the defending forces from being cut off, USAFFE ordered a general withdrawal to the Bagac-Orion defense line, to be completed by the 26th.

The enemy advancing along the mountainous west coast did not contact General Wainwright's forward positions until 15 January. By that date, Homma, impressed by the lack of resistance in this sector, had already ordered the *20th Infantry* of the *16th Division* to reinforce and exploit the drive, strike through to the Bagac road junction, and gain the rear of Parker's corps. Although I Corps had been stripped of reserves to back up the sagging eastern defense line, Wainwright's front-line troops were able to stand off the initial Japanese assaults. When Homma's fresh troops attacked on the 21st, however, they effected a lodgment behind the front which eventually made withdrawal toward Bagac mandatory. The local Japanese commander, encouraged by his success, de-

[8] *Canopus Hist*, 14.

[9] Col W. F. Prickett ltr to CMC, October 1956.

[10] Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is taken from *USAFFE–USFIP Rept; 14th Army Rept; 4th Mar Jnl; Clement Rept; Bridget Rept; Hogaboom;* Btry A, US NavBn, Narrative of events, 2Feb42; 2dLt M. E. Peshek ltr to CO, 2/4, "Report of operation of Marine Detachment sent to Bataan on 25 January 1942," 2Feb42; GunSgt H. M. Ferrell ltr to CO, 1/4, "Temporary Duty of Mortar Platoon, vicinity of Mariveles, Bataan, Philippine Islands, from January 25, 1942, to January 30, 1942, inclusive," 31Jan42; *Fall of the Philippines.*

cided on a shore-to-shore amphibious assault which would hit the Bataan coastal road about four miles below Bagac.

Embarking after dark on the night of 22–23 January, the enemy's 900-man landing force (*2d Battalion, 20th Infantry*) started out for its objective. It never arrived. En route two launches of the battalion's boat group were discovered and sunk by an American torpedo boat [11] and it is possible that these attacks were instrumental in scattering the remainder of the landing force. In any event, the enemy boats lost their bearings completely in the darkness. Instead of landing on the objective, two-thirds of the unit landed at Quinauan Point, eight miles south of Bagac. The remainder of the battalion, 7 officers and 294 men, came ashore at Longoskawayan Point, a finger-like promontory only 2,000 yards west of Mariveles. (See Map 7, Map Section)

The Longoskawayan landing force was not discovered immediately, and the enemy had time to advance along jungle-matted cliffs and reach Lapiay Point, the next promontory to the north. The Japanese patrols headed inland from Lapiay for Mt. Pucot, a 617-foot hill which commanded both the west coast road and the landing site. The first word of the presence of the enemy in his defense sector reached Commander Bridget at 0840 on 23 January when the small lookout detachment he had posted on Pucot was driven from its position by enemy machine-gun fire.

Bridget immediately phoned Hogaboom and Holdredge, directing both officers to send out patrols. Hogaboom, closest to the scene of action, sent one bluejacket platoon under Lieutenant (junior grade) Leslie A. Pew directly to Pucot while he led a second platoon himself in a sweep through the ridges south of the hill. Pew's platoon deployed as it approached the hilltop, attacked through scattered rifle and machine-gun fire, and secured the high ground without difficulty. The Japanese offered only slight resistance and then faded out of contact.

South of the hill Hogaboom ran into a platoon from Battery C which had had a brush with the Japanese and taken a couple of casualties, but again the enemy had disappeared. The story of light firing and no firm resistance was much the same from the rest of the probing patrols which Bridget ordered out on the 23d; the Japanese evidently were still feeling out the situation and were not as yet disposed to make a stand or an attack. At dusk the patrols assembled on the mountain and set up a defense line along its crest and the ridges to the south facing Lapiay and Longoskawayan Points.

During the day Bridget had called on the Service Command for reinforcements but few men could be spared as most reserves already had been committed to contain the larger landing force at Quinauan Point. For infantry he got the 3d Pursuit Squadron and 60 men from the 301st Chemical Company whom he put into a holding line above Lapiay Point and on the north slope of Pucot; for fire support he received one 2.95-inch mountain pack howitzer and crew from the 71st Division. By nightfall the chemical company had tied in with the pursuit squadron on its right and with Battery A atop Pucot on its left; platoons from Battery C, the Air, Asiatic Fleet Company, and the Naval

[11] ComMTBron–3, Rept of Act of USS PT–34 on the night of 22–23Jan42, 27Feb42 (located at NHD), 1.

Ammunition Depot Company held the rest of Pucot's crest and the southern ridges which blocked off the landing area from Mariveles.[12] None of the naval battalion units was at full strength and none of the platoons strung out along the ridges was strictly a Navy or a Marine outfit. Sailors predominated but Marines were present all along the line, mostly as squad leaders and platoon sergeants. The composition of that part of the battalion which got into action became even more varied as the battle shaped up, and eventually about a third of the men on the front-line were drawn from the Marine batteries.

Bridget's men got their first real taste of the blind fighting of jungle warfare on the 24th. Hogaboom led a patrol down the bluff above Lapiay Point and ran head-on into an enemy machine gun firing from heavy cover. Grenades thrown at the gun exploded harmlessly in a tangle of lush vegetation which screened it from view; the men were being fired upon and they were replying, but sound rather than sight was the key to targets. When reinforcements arrived later in the day an attempt was made to establish a holding line across the point, but the Japanese opened up with a second machine gun and steady rifle fire. Then they began dropping mortar and howitzer shells among Hogaboom's group. The Marine officer ordered a withdrawal to the previous night's positions.

The source of the mortar and howitzer fire was Longoskawayan Point where a patrol led by Lieutenant Holdredge had encountered the main body of Japanese. His two-man point had surprised an enemy group setting up a field piece in a clearing and opened up with a rifle and a BAR, dropping about a dozen men around the gun. The Japanese reaction was swift, agreeing with the BAR-man's evaluation that the surprise fire "ought to make them madder'n hell."[13] The patrol fell back, fighting a rear guard action until it cleared the area of the point's tip, and then it retired to the ridges. After the day's action Hogaboom and Holdredge compared notes and estimated that they faced at least 200 well-equipped enemy troops in strong positions; they informed Bridget of their conclusion that it would take a fully-organized battalion with supporting weapons to dislodge them.

On the morning of 25 January, USAFFE augmented Bridget's force by sending him a machine-gun platoon and an 81mm mortar platoon from the 4th Marines on The Rock. The two mortars immediately set up on a saddle northwest of Pucot and, with Hogaboom spotting for them, worked over the whole of Lapiay and Longoskawayan Points; direct hits were scored on the positions where the Japanese had been encountered the day before. A midafternoon patrol discovered that the enemy had evacuated Lapiay, but it was soon evident where they had gone. Holdredge led a combined force of several platoons against Longoskawayan Point and ran into a hornet's nest. He himself was among those wounded before the pla-

[12] An officer of 3/4 who knew many of the survivors of this action, later wrote an article describing the battle. He maintained that the Army detachments mentioned never joined, although they may have been assigned, and that the purely naval companies were not used as such. Instead the sailors who could be spared joined one of the Marine units. While this story is quite credible, in this instance the contemporary *Bridget Rept* has been used as a guide. See LtCol W. F. Prickett, "Naval Battalion at Mariveles," *MC Gazette*, June 1950, 40–43.

[13] Quoted in *Hogaboom*, 10.

toons could extricate themselves. Again the naval battalion occupied blocking positions on the ridges east of the points for night defense.

During the action of the 25th, USAFFE had changed the command structure in the rear service area and given the corps commanders responsibility for beach defense throughout Bataan. In addition, MacArthur had granted permission for the 12-inch mortars on Corregidor to support Bridget's battalion. Shortly after midnight, the giant mortars, spotted in by an observer on Mt. Pucot, laid several rounds on Longoskawayan Point. The daylight hours were spent in light patrol action while the battalion was readied for a full-scale attack on the 27th. General Wainwright sent a battery of Philippine Scout 75mm guns to support the drive.

At 0700 on 27 January the mountain howitzer, the Marine mortars, the Scout 75's, and Corregidor's 12-inch mortars fired a preparation on Longoskawayan, and a skirmish line of about 200 men, some 60–75 of them Marines, started to advance. The enemy reoccupied his positions as soon as the supporting fire lifted, and the jungle came alive with bullets and shell fragments. The right and center of the line made little progress in the face of heavy machine-gun fire. On the left where the going was a little easier a gap soon opened through which Japanese infiltrating groups were able to reach the reserve's positions.

During the resulting hectic fighting, the enemy opened up with mortar fire to herald a counterattack; fortunately, the 4th Marines' 81's were able to silence this fire, but it was soon obvious that the naval battalion was in no shape to advance farther or even to hold its lines on Longoskawayan. Bridget again authorized a withdrawal to the night defense lines on the eastern ridges.

The solution to the problem of eliminating the Japanese beachhead arrived late that afternoon. Colonel Clement, who had come over from Corregidor to advise Bridget on the conduct of the Longoskawayan action, had requested reinforcements from I Corps. Wainwright sent in the regular troops needed and the 2d Battalion of the 57th Philippine Scout Regiment relieved the naval battalion, which went into reserve. The 4th Marines' mortars and machine guns were assigned to the Scouts to support their operations. The oddly-assorted platoons of Bridget's battalion were not committed to action again, but they had done their job in containing the Japanese though outnumbered and outgunned.

The Scouts spent 28 January in developing the Longoskawayan position. On the 29th they attacked in full strength with all the support they could muster. The mine sweeper *Quail*, risking an encounter with Japanese destroyers, came out from Mariveles and cruised offshore while Commander Bridget spotted for the 12-inch mortars and the 75mm guns. The ship closed from 2,200 to 1,300 yards firing point-blank at Japanese soldiers trying to hide out in the caves and undergrowth along the shores of the point.[14] Ashore the Scouts, supported by machine-gun and mortar fire from the landing flanking the point, did the job expected of them and smashed through the enemy lines. By nightfall organized resistance had ended and the cost of taking Lapiay and Long-

[14] CO USS *Quail* Rept of Act at Longoskawayan Pt morning of 29Jan42, 30Jan42 (located at NHD), 1.

oskawayan had been counted. Bridget's unit had lost 11 killed and 26 wounded in action; the Scout casualties were 11 dead and 27 wounded; and the Japanese had lost their entire landing force.

During the next few days patrols, aided by ship's launches armored and manned by crewmen from the *Canopus*, mopped up the area, killing stragglers and taking a few prisoners, but the threat to Mariveles was ended. Similar action by adequately supported Scout units wiped out the Quinauan Point landing force by 7 February. The major Japanese attempt to reinforce the beleaguered troops on Quinauan was beaten back by the combined fire of artillery, naval guns, and the strafing of the four P–40's remaining on Bataan. Elements of an enemy battalion which did get ashore on a point of land just above Quinauan on 27 January and 2 February were also finished off by the Scouts.

By 13 February the last survivors of the amphibious attempts had been killed or captured. The make-shift beach defense forces which had initially contained the landings had barely managed to hold their own against the Japanese. They had had to overreach themselves to keep the enemy off balance and prevent a breakthrough while the troops of I and II Corps were falling back to the Bagac-Orion position. Once that line was occupied and Wainwright could commit some of his best troops in sufficient numbers and with adequate support, the Japanese were finished. Discouraged by their amphibious fiasco, the enemy never again attempted to hit the coastal flanks of the American-Filipino positions.

At the same time the survivors of the landing attempts were being hunted down, the Japanese offensive sputtered to a halt in front of the Bagac-Orion line. The initial enemy advance on Bataan had not been made without cost, and the casualty rate now soared so high that the attacking troops were rendered ineffective. On 13 February Homma found it necessary to break contact, pull back to a line of blocking positions, and to regroup his battered forces. The lull in the *Fourteenth Army's* attack was only temporary, however, as Homma was promised replacements and reinforcements. When the second phase of the battle for Bataan opened, the scales were heavily tipped in favor of the Japanese.

The detachment of *Canopus* crewmen, the sailors from the Cavite Naval Ammunition Depot, and the majority of the general duty men, nine officers and 327 enlisted men in all, were transferred to the 4th Marines on Corregidor on 17–18 February. Commander Bridget and his naval aviation contingent moved to Fort Hughes on the 30th where Bridget became beach defense commander with Major Stuart W. King of the 4th Marines as his executive officer. Battery C of 3/4 remained at Mariveles to man its antiaircraft guns, but Battery A rejoined the regiment, with most of its men going to Headquarters Company to augment the regimental reserve.

The assignment of the sailors of the naval battalion to Colonel Howard's command accentuated the growing joint-service character of the Marine regiment. Small contingents of crewmen from damaged or sunken boats of the Inshore Patrol also had been joined and over 700 Philippine Army air cadets and their officers were now included in the 4th's ranks. These men, most of whom had never had

any infantry training, were distributed throughout the companies on beach defense and in reserve where the experienced Marines could best train them by example and close individual instruction. No company in the regiment retained an all-Marine complexion.

The arrival of reinforcements on Corregidor and Caballo came at a time when the Japanese had stepped up their campaign against the fortified islands. On 6 February, the first enemy shells, fired by 105mm guns emplaced along the shore of Cavite Province, exploded amidst the American positions on all the islands. The reaction was swift and the forts replied with the guns that could bear. The counterbattery exchange continued throughout February and early March, occasionally waning as the Japanese were forced to shift to new firing positions by gunners on Forts Frank and Drum. The limited number of planes available to Homma made enemy bombers infrequent visitors during this period, and the Japanese concentrated on reducing the island defenses with artillery fire. In the first week of March, the American commander on Fort Frank received a demand for its surrender with a boast that the Cavite coast was lined with artillery and that:

> . . . Carabao will be reduced by our mighty artillery fire, likewise Drum; after reduction of Carabao and Drum our invincible artillery will pound Corregidor into submission, batter it, weaken it, preparatory to a final assault by crack Japanese landing troops.[16]

The surrender note was unproductive for the enemy, but it was prophetic regarding the fate of Corregidor.

Until the Japanese were ready to renew their assault on Bataan in late March, the severity of the enemy shellings from Cavite was not great enough to be effective in halting the construction and improvement of beach defenses on Corregidor. Trenches and gun positions lined the shores of Bottomside and the ravines leading to Topside and Middleside from the beaches. Barbed wire entanglements and mine fields improvised from aerial bombs were laid across all possible approaches. The ordnance stores of the island were searched to provide increased firepower for the 4th Marines,[17] and guns were sited to insure that any landing force would be caught in a murderous crossfire if it attempted to reach shore.

The thoroughness of the regiment's preparations was indicative of its high state of morale. The men manning the beach defenses, and to a lesser extent their comrades in the jungles of Bataan, never completely abandoned hope of rescue and relief until the very last days of their ordeal.[18] Even when General MacArthur was ordered to leave the Philippines to take over a new Allied command in the Southwest Pacific, many men thought that he would return, leading a strong relief force. The senior commanders in the Philippines and the Allied leaders knew the truth, however, and realized that barring a miracle, Luzon was doomed to fall. Only a few key men could be taken out of the trap by submarine, torpedo boat, or

[16] Quoted in *USAFFE-USFIP Rept*, 40–41.

[17] One source of beach defense guns was the sub-caliber 37mm's which were used for practice firing by Corregidor's big guns. These were dismounted from the gun tubes and turned over to the Marines. LtGen S. L. Howard interview by HistBr, G–3, HQMC, 26Oct56, hereinafter cited as *Howard Interview*.

[18] Maj T. E. Pulos ltr to CMC, 30Oct56.

plane; the rest had to be left to accept their fate.

On 11 March, the day before MacArthur and his party started the first leg of their journey to Australia, he created a new headquarters, Luzon Force, to control the operations on Bataan and appointed General Wainwright to its command. On 20 March, the War Department notified Wainwright of his promotion to lieutenant general and of the fact that he was to be commander of all forces remaining in the Philippines. To take the place of USAFFE, an area headquarters, United States Forces in the Philippines (USFIP), was created.

To take his place on Bataan, Wainwright appointed the USAFFE Artillery Officer, Major General Edward P. King, Jr. King drew an unenviable task when he took over Luzon Force, for the volume of Japanese preparatory fire on Bataan and on the island forts indicated the start of a major effort. To meet this attack, King had troops who had already spent two weeks on a diet of 3/8 of a ration on top of two months of half rations; they were ready to fight but "with not enough food in their bellies to sustain a dog." [19] The USAFFE Surgeon General, on 18 February, had accounted Bataan's defenders as being only 55% combat efficient as a result of "debilities due to malaria, dysentery, and general malnutrition." [20] These same men were now a month further along on the road to exhaustion and collapse and were destined to meet a fresh and vigorous enemy assault.

[19] *Wainwright's Story*, 76. The ration was cut to 3/8 on 2 March according to *USAFFE–USFIP Rept* entry for that date.

[20] Quoted in Diary of Maj A. C. Tisdelle, Aide to MajGen King, entry of 18Feb42.

THE FALL OF BATAAN [21]

The *Fourteenth Army* set 3 April as D-day for its renewed offensive on Bataan, and General Homma foresaw "no reason why this attack should not succeed." [22] He could well be confident since he had received the infantry replacements needed to rebuild the *16th Division* and the *65th Brigade*, and he had been sent the *4th Division* from Shanghai. In addition, *Imperial Headquarters* had allotted him a strongly reinforced infantry regiment from the *21st Division*, originally slated for duty in Indo-China. His artillery strength had been more than doubled and now included far-ranging 240mm howitzers. Two heavy bomber regiments had been flown up from Malaya to increase materially his mastery of the air.

Once the enemy attack was launched, the pressure on Bataan's defenders was relentless. In less than a week the issue had been decided. The physically weakened Americans and Filipinos tried desperately to stem the Japanese advance, but to no avail. By 7 April the last reserves had been committed. A growing stream of dazed, disorganized men, seeking to escape the incessant bombardment at the front and the onrushing enemy, crowded the roads and trails leading to Mariveles. Only isolated groups of soldiers still fought to hold the Japanese back from the tip of the peninsula. Under these circumstances, General King decided to seek surrender terms. His aide recorded the situation in his diary:

> 8th [April]. Wednesday. The army can not attack. It is impossible. Area is congested with stragglers . . . General King has ordered all

[21] Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *USAFFE–USFIP Rept; 14th Army Rept; Fall of the Philippines.*

[22] *14th Army Rept*, Appendix 4, 17.

tanks thrown [blown?] and arms destroyed, and is going forward to contact the Japanese and try to avert a massacre.[23]

Near midnight on the 8th a severe earthquake tremor was felt on Corregidor and Bataan, and soon thereafter the Mariveles harbor was shaking violently from man-made explosions, as King's orders to destroy all munitions dumps were carried out. To an observer on The Rock it seemed that:

> . . . the southern end of Bataan was a huge conflagration which resembled more than anything else a volcano in violent eruption . . . white hot pieces of metal from exploded shells and bombs shot skyward by the thousands in every conceivable direction. Various colored flares exploded in great numbers and charged off on crazy courses much the same as a sky rocket which has run wild on the ground.[24]

All night long the water between Bataan and Corregidor was lashed with falling debris and fragments from the explosions. Through this deadly shower a procession of small craft dodged its way to the north dock of Bottomside. Everything that could float was pressed into use by frantic refugees. Some of the arrivals, however, such as the nurses from Bataan's hospitals, were under orders to report to Corregidor. Specific units that could strengthen The Rock's garrison, antiaircraft batteries and the 45th Philippine Scout Regiment, had also been called for. Only the AAA gunners from the Mariveles area, including the 4th Marines' Battery C, managed to escape. The Scout regiment was prevented from reaching the harbor in time by the jammed condition of the roads.

By noon on 9 April, General King had found out that no terms would be given him; the Japanese demanded unconditional surrender. With thousands of his men lying wounded and sick in open air general hospitals and all hope of successful resistance gone, King accepted the inevitable and surrendered, asking only that his men be given fair treatment. The battle for Bataan had ended, and more than 75,000 gallant men began the first of more than a thousand days of brutal captivity.

[23] Tisdelle, *op. cit.*

[24] LCdr T. C. Parker, "The Epic of Corregidor-Bataan, December 24, 1941–May 4, 1942," *USNI Proceedings*, January 1943, 18, hereinafter cited as *Parker*.

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The Siege and Capture of Corregidor

THE JAPANESE PLANS[1]

On 9 April the victorious *Fourteenth Army* paused on the shore of Bataan with its next target—Corregidor—dead center in its sights. Many enemy staff officers, both in Tokyo and on Luzon, wanted to launch an immediate amphibious attack, taking advantage of the army's success on Bataan. The dearth of landing craft in Manila Bay, however, effectively served to postpone the operation. Most of the Japanese landing barges and boats were located in Lingayen Gulf or Subic Bay and had to be moved past Corregidor's guns to the designated staging areas on the eastern coast of Bataan. (See Map 8, Map Section)

On the night of 14 April the first small group of boats slipped by The Rock, hugging Bataan's shore while the enemy shelled and bombed the island's north coast to prevent their discovery.[2] Because they were forced to follow this method of moving a few boats at a time and these only at night and behind a curtain of protective fire, the Japanese took more than three weeks to assemble the necessary assault craft.

The need for extreme caution in making the risky passage into Manila Bay was not the only factor which acted against rapid execution of the Japanese assault plan. In mid-April a severe outbreak of malaria in the ranks of the *4th Division*, Homma's chosen landing force, severely hampered attack preparations, but amphibious training and rehearsals continued despite the temporary decrease in the division's effective strength. Emergency supplies of quinine tablets were flown to Luzon in time to check the spread of the disease and restore fighting trim.

The *Fourteenth Army* was obsessed, with the need for deception and secrecy and stringent security measures were taken to conceal the preparations for the attack on Corregidor. A consistent effort was made to create the impression that Cavite Province was the Japanese amphibious base and that Forts Frank and Drum were the targets. Landing craft maneuvered off Cavite's shores while the army's air and artillery pounded the defenses of the southern islands. Two battalions of the *16th Division* feigned preparations for an attack on Frank and Drum, but there was little doubt at USFIP Headquarters that Corregidor was the primary Japanese objective.

Every day in April, starting with the day Bataan fell, an increasingly heavier concentration of enemy artillery pieces found firing positions in the peninsula's jungled hills. At least thirty-seven batteries, whose weapons ranged from 75mm mountain guns to 240mm howitzers, covered Corregidor with a continuous pattern of fire that reached every position and knocked out the major portion of the

[1] Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *14th Army Rept; Philippine AirOpsRec; Fall of the Philippines.*

[2] *4th Mar Jnl*, 374.

island's defenses.[3] Nine Japanese bombing squadrons, capitalizing on the gradual weakening of antiaircraft fire, were overhead to add their bombardment to the attack preparation.

The enemy *4th Division* was reinforced for the assault with two independent engineer regiments to man the transport and support landing craft as well as a tank regiment and three mortar battalions to provide additional firepower. The actual landing operation was to be made in two stages with Colonel Gempachi Sato's *61st Infantry Regiment* (two infantry battalions, a tank company, a mountain artillery battery, and mortar units) designated the initial assault force. Sato was to land his unit in successive waves, battalions abreast along the beaches between Infantry and Cavalry Points on the night of 5 May. After establishing a beachhead, he was to send most of his men against Malinta Hill while the remainder of the regiment drove across the tail of the island to isolate and contain the defenders east of Infantry Point. The plan called for the *61st Regiment* to be in possession of Malinta Hill by dawn, ready to support a second landing.

Twenty-four hours after Sato's force landed, the division's main assault effort would strike beaches between Morrison and Battery Points, near James Ravine, and at the neck of the island. This second landing force, four heavily reinforced infantry battalions, would have the assistance of Sato's unit which was scheduled to make a concurrent attack against Ramsay Battery hill. Throughout the whole operation the artillery on Bataan, operating under army control, was to deliver preparatory and supporting fires, and in daylight hours the army's air squadrons were to fly close support missions.

The *4th Division* had three infantry battalions in reserve for its attack but did not expect that they would be needed. The Japanese were confident that their preparatory bombardment had knocked most of the fight out of Corregidor. Every terrain feature on the island was plotted and registered on artillery target maps and any signal for support from the assault forces would call down a smother of accurate fire on the defenders. The enemy felt certain that dusk of 7 May would see their assault troops in control of Corregidor.

LIFE ON A BULL'S EYE[4]

During the 27 days between the fall of Bataan and the assault on Corregidor, life on The Rock became a living hell. The men in the open gun pits and exposed beach defenses were subjected to an increasing rain of shells and bombs. It became virtually impossible to move about the

[3] Many survivors and a number of accounts of this siege credit the Japanese with having as many as 400 artillery pieces firing on the fortified islands by 5 May. The figure of 37 batteries (approximately 150 pieces) represents only the enemy artillery units listed in *14th Army Rept*, 187 as part of the Corregidor attack organization.

[4] Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *USAFFE-USFIP Rept; Moore Rept; 4th Mar Jnl; Hayes Rept;* Capt C. B. Brook, USN, Personal Experiences 8Apr-6 May 56, n.d., hereinafter cited as *Brook;* Maj H. E. Dalness, USA, "The Operations of the 4th Battalion (Provisional) 4th Marine Regiment in the Final Counterattack in the Defense of Corregidor 5–6 May 1942," AdvInfOff Course 1949–50, The InfSch, Ft. Benning, Ga., hereinafter cited as *Dalness; Ferguson; Jenkins;* 1stLt O. E. Saalman, USA, Personal Experiences 12Apr–6May42, n.d., hereinafter cited as *Saalman.*

AERIAL VIEW OF CORREGIDOR ISLAND *showing in the foreground the area of the battle between the Japanese landing force and the 4th Marines. (SC 200883-S)*

EFFECT OF JAPANESE BOMBARDMENT OF CORREGIDOR *is shown in this photograph taken the day after the surrender near the main entrance to Malinta Hill. (SC 282343)*

island by daylight; enemy artillery spotters aloft in observation balloons on Bataan and in planes overhead had a clear view of their targets. The dense vegetation which had once covered most of Corregidor was stripped away by blast and fragmentation to reveal the dispositions of Howard's command. The tunnels through Malinta Hill, their laterals crowded with headquarters installations and hospital beds, offered refuge for only a fraction of the 11,000-man garrison and the rest of the defenders had to stick it out with little hope of protection from the deadly downpour.

Most of the escapees from Bataan were ordered to join the 4th Marines, thus adding 72 officers and 1,173 enlisted men to its strength between 9 and 12 April.[5] The majority of the Army combat veterans, however, "were in such poor physical condition that they were incapable of even light work," [6] and had to be hospitalized. The mixed collection of infantry, artillery, aviation, and service personnel from both American and Philippine units assigned to the beach defense battalions was in little better shape than the men who had been committed to the hospital under Malinta Hill. The commander of 1/4's reserve, First Lieutenant Robert F. Jenkins, Jr., who received a typical contingent of Bataan men to augment his small force commented that he:

> . . . had never seen men in such poor physical condition. Their clothing was ragged and stained from perspiration and dirt. Their gaunt, unshaven faces were strained and emaciated. Some of them were already suffering from beriberi as a result of a starvation diet of rice for weeks. We did what we could for them and then put them to work on the beach defenses.[7]

The sailors from Mariveles, mostly crewmen from the now-scuttled *Canopus*, were kept together and formed into a new 275-man reserve battalion for the regiment, the 4th Battalion, 4th Marines.[8] Not only was the designation of 4/4 unusual, but so was its makeup and its personnel. Only six Marines served in the battalion: its commander, Major Francis H. Williams, and five NCOs. The staff, company commanders, and platoon leaders were drawn from the nine Army and 18 Navy officers assigned to assist Williams.[9] The four rifle companies were designated Q, R, S, and T, the highest lettered companies the men had ever heard of. Another boast of the bluejackets turned Marines was that they were "the highest paid battalion in the world, as most of the men

[5] The former sergeant major of 2/4 believes that the regiment joined substantially more men than this figure which appears in the regimental journal. He recalls that the 2d Bn "picked up for rations, and on the crudest rolls, at least 600 men" and believes that the other battalions did the same. *Jackson.*

[6] *Wainwright's Story*, 87.

[7] *Jenkins*, 13.

[8] Most survivors of 4/4 refer to the battalion as having had approximately 500 men in its ranks. Strength breakdowns of the 4th Mar exist up through 1May42, however, and nowhere do they support the larger figure. The S-3 of 4/4 is certain that the total strength of the battalion on 6 May was no more than 350 men. Maj O. E. Saalman ltr to CMC, 22Oct56, hereinafter cited as *Saalman 1956.*

[9] Survivors of 4/4 are unable to agree on the identity of the man who served as ExO of the battalion; at least five Army or Navy officers have been mentioned. In addition, the possibility that a Marine who was closely connected with 4/4 was *de facto* ExO was brought out by one of the NCOs who recalls that "Major Williams always considered Gunner Joe Reardon [QMClk Joseph J. Reardon] as his Executive Officer and Adjutant." MSgt K. W. Mize ltr to CMC, 1Nov56.

were petty officers of the upper pay grades." [10]

The new organization went into bivouac in Government Ravine as part of the regimental reserve. The reserve had heretofore consisted of men from the Headquarters and Service Companies, reinforced by Philippine Air cadets and Marines from Bataan. Major Max W. Schaeffer, who had replaced Major King as reserve commander, had organized this force of approximately 250 men into two tactical companies, O and P. Company O was commanded by Captain Robert Chambers, Jr. and Company P by Lieutenant Hogaboom; the platoons were led by Marine warrant officers and senior NCOs.

A good part of Schaeffer's men had primary duties connected with regimental supply and administration, but each afternoon the companies assembled in the bivouac area where the troops were instructed in basic infantry tactics and the employment of their weapons. Despite the constant interruptions of air raids and shellings, the Marines and Filipinos had a chance "to get acquainted with each other, familiarize themselves with each others' voices, and to learn [the] teamwork" [11] so essential to effective combat operations. Frequently, Major Schaeffer conducted his company and platoon commanders on reconnaissance of beach defenses so that the reserve leaders would be familiar with routes of approach and terrain in each sector in which they might fight.

While Schaeffer's unit had had some time to train before the Japanese stepped up their bombardment of the island in late March, Williams' battalion was organized at the inception of the period of heaviest enemy fire and spent part of every day huddled in foxholes dug along the trail between Geary Point and Government Ravine. [12] Any let-up in the bombardment would be the signal for small groups of men to gather around the Army officers and Marine NCOs for instruction in the use of their weapons and the tactics of small units. Rifles were zeroed in on floating debris in the bay and for most of the men this markmanship training was their first since Navy boot camp. When darkness limited Japanese shelling to harassment and interdiction fires, the sailors formed eager audiences for the Army Bataan veterans who gave them a resumé of enemy battle tactics. Every man was dead serious, knowing that his chances for survival depended to a large extent upon how much he learned. "The chips were down; there was no horseplay." [13]

To a very great extent the record of the 4th Battalion in the fighting on Corregidor was a tribute to the inspirational leadership of its commander. During the trying period under enemy shellfire and bombing when the battalion's character was molded, Major Williams seemed to be omnipresent; wherever the bombardment was heaviest, he showed up to see how his men were weathering the storm. When on separate occasions Battery Crockett and then Battery Geary were hit and set afire, he led rescue parties from 4/4 into the resulting holocausts of flame, choking smoke, and exploding ammunition to rescue the wounded. He seemed to have

[10] *Brook*, 1.

[11] *Ferguson*, 10.

[12] Dr. C. E. Chunn ltr to CMC, 12Nov56, hereinafter cited as *Chunn*.

[13] *Dalness*, 7.

an utter disregard for his own safety in the face of any need for his presence. Survivors of his battalion agree with startling unanimity that he was a giant among men at a time when courage was commonplace.

Raw courage was a necessity on the fortified islands after Bataan's fall, since there was no defiladed position that could not be reached by Japanese 240mm howitzers firing from Cavite and Bataan. The bombers overhead, increasingly bold as gun after gun of the antiaircraft defenses was knocked out, came down lower to pinpoint targets. Counterbattery and antiaircraft fire silenced some enemy guns and accounted for a number of planes, but nothing seemed to halt the buildup of preparatory fires.

On 28 April Howard issued a warning to his battalions that the next day would be a rough one. It was the Emperor's birthday and the Japanese could be expected to "celebrate by unusual aerial and artillery bombardment."[14] The colonel's prophecy proved to be a true one, and on the 29th one observer noted that even "the kitchen sink came over."[15] The birthday celebration marked the beginning of a period when the enemy bombarded the islands without letup, day and night. The men manning the beach defenses of Corregidor's East Sector found it:

> . . . practically impossible to get any rest or to repair any damage to our positions and barbed wire. Our field telephone system was knocked out; our water supply was ruined (drinking water had to be hauled from the other end of the island in large powder cans) . . . Corregidor was enveloped in a cloud of smoke, dust, and the continuous roar of bursting shells and bombs. There were many more casualties than we had suffered in the previous five months.[16]

About three days prior to the Japanese landing, Lieutenant Colonel Beecher reported to Colonel Howard that defensive installations in the 1st Battalion's sector were:

> . . . practically destroyed. Very little defensive wire remained, tank traps constructed with great difficulty had been rendered useless, and all my weapons were in temporary emplacements as the original emplacements had been destroyed. I told Colonel Howard at this time that I was very dubious as to my ability to withstand a landing attack in force. Colonel Howard reported the facts to General Wainwright, who, according to Colonel Howard, said that he would never surrender. I pointed out to Colonel Howard that I had said nothing about surrender but that I was merely reporting the facts as it was my duty to do.[17]

The increase in the fury of the Japanese bombardment with the coming of May, coupled with the frequent sightings of landing craft along the eastern shore of Bataan, clearly pointed to the imminence of an enemy landing attempt. The last successful effort to evacuate personnel from the island forts was made on the night of 3 May. The submarine *Spearfish* surfaced after dark outside the mine fields off Corregidor and took on a party of officers and nurses who had been ordered out, as well as a load of important USFIP records and a roster of every person still alive on the islands.[18] The 4th Marines

[14] *4th Mar Jnl*, 392.

[15] *Parker*, 20.

[16] *Jenkins*, 15–16.

[17] BriGen C. T. Beecher ltr to Mr. G. J. Berry, 17Mar50 (deposited by Capt G. J. Berry, USMCR, in the USMC Archives, 30Oct56).

[18] Submarines were the beleaguered garrison's only contact with Allied bases outside the Philippines during most of the siege. Although the subs brought in rations, antiaircraft ammunition, and medical supplies on scattered occasions, the

sent out their regimental journal, its last entry, dated 2 May, the list of the five men who had been killed and the nine who had been wounded during the day's bombardment.

To one of the lucky few who got orders to leave on the *Spearfish* the receding island looked "beaten and burnt to a crisp."[19] In one day, 2 May, USFIP estimated that 12 240mm shells a minute had fallen on Corregidor during a five-hour period. On the same day the Japanese flew 55 sorties over the islands dropping 12 1,000-pound, 45 500-pound, and 159 200-pound bombs.[20] The damage was extensive. Battery Geary's eight 12-inch mortars were completely destroyed as was one of Battery Crockett's two 12-inch guns. The enemy fire also knocked out of action two more 12-inch mortars, a 3-inch gun, three searchlights, five 3-inch and three .50 caliber antiaircraft guns, and a height finder. Data transmission cables to the guns were cut in many places and all communication lines were damaged. The beach defenses lost four machine guns, a 37mm, and a pillbox; barbed wire, mine fields, and antiboat obstacles were torn apart.

The logical landing points for an assault against Corregidor, the entire East Sector and the ravines that gave access to Topside and Middleside, received a special working over so steady and deadly that the effectiveness of the beach defenses was sharply reduced. Casualties mounted as the men's foxholes, trenches, and shelters crumbled under the fire. Unit leaders checking the state of the defenses were especially vulnerable to the fragments of steel which swept the ground bare. By the Japanese-appointed X-Day (5 May) the 1st Battalion had lost the commander of Company A, Major Harry C. Lang, and Captain Paul A. Brown, commanding Company B, had been hospitalized as a result of severe concussion suffered during an enemy bombing attack.[21] Three Army officers attached to the Reserve Company, an officer of Company B, and another of Company D had all been severely wounded.

Despite the damage to defenses it had so laboriously constructed, the 4th Marines was ready, indeed almost eager, to meet a Japanese assault after days and weeks of absorbing punishment without a chance to strike back. On the eve of a battle which no one doubted was coming, the regiment was perhaps the most unusual Marine unit ever to take the field. From an understrength two-battalion regiment of less than 800 Marine regulars it had grown until it mustered almost 4,000 officers and men drawn from all the services and 142 different organizations.[22] Its ranks contained 72 Marine officers and 1,368 enlisted

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amount that they could carry was only enough for stop-gap relief. For the interesting story of the diversified submarine actions in support of USAFFE-USFIP see, T. Roscoe, *United States Submarine Operations in World War II* (Annapolis: U. S. Naval Institute, 1949), 23–39.

[19] *Parker*, 22.

[20] *Philippine AirOpsRec*, Plate 8.

[21] Beecher ltr to Berry, *op. cit.*

[22] The last complete contemporary breakdown of strength of the 4th Mar by component units is contained in *4th Mar Jnl*, 390. It was corrected through 1 May. A slightly earlier list dated 28Apr42, detached from the journal book but unmistakably once part of it, has an interesting appendix which gives the units from which attached personnel originated. It shows that 26 Navy, 104 American and Philippine Army, 9 Philippine Scout, and 3 Philippine Constabulary organizations furnished men to the 4th Mar.

Marines, 37 Navy officers [23] and 848 bluejackets, and 111 American and Philippine Air Corps, Army, Scout, and Constabulary officers with 1,455 of their men.

The units that actually met the Japanese at the beaches—1/4, 4/4, and the regimental reserve—had such a varied makeup that it deserves to be recorded: [24]

Service component	HqCo		SerCo		1st Bn		4th Bn	
	Off	Enl	Off	Enl	Off	Enl	Off	Enl
USMC & USMCR	14	80	6	63	16	344	1	5
USN (MC & DC)	3	7	------	1	3	13	2	6
USN	1	16	------	1	1	78	16	262
USNR	------	21	------	------	------	30	------	------
USA	1	------	1	------	26	286	9	2
Philippine Insular Navy	------	4	------	------	------	------	------	------
Philippine Army Air Corps	6	83	------	------	7	217	------	------
Philippine Scouts	------	------	------	------	------	33	------	------
Philippine Army	------	------	------	------	------	22	------	------
Philippine Constabulary	------	------	------	------	1	1	------	------
Totals	25	211	7	65	53	1,024	28	275

THE JAPANESE LANDING [25]

The area chosen by the Japanese for their initial assault, the 4th Marines' East Sector, was a shambles by nightfall on 5 May. Two days earlier the regimental intelligence journal had noted that:

> There has been a distinct shifting of enemy artillery fire from inland targets to our beach defenses on the north side of Corregidor the past 24 hours.[26]

This concentration of fire continued and intensified, smashing the last vestiges of a coordinated and cohesive defensive zone and shaping 1/4's beach positions into an irregular series of strong points where a few machine guns and 37mm's were still in firing order. A pair of Philippine Scout-manned 75mm guns, located just

[23] The five Marine officers, two Navy doctors, and 96 Marine enlisted men previously captured in China and on Bataan have been omitted from these figures.

[24] The 1May42 listing of regimental strength does not indicate the tactical breakdown of Hq and SerCos into Cos O and P. The figures shown, therefore, include a number of regimental staff officers, probably two-thirds of the total, and a few enlisted men who did not serve in Maj Schaeffer's command. One officer and five enlisted men have been deducted from SerCo's USMC Strength and added to that of 4/4.

[25] Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *USAFFE-USFIP Rept; Moore Rept; 14th Army Rept; Howard Rept;* MG H. M. Ferrell, Personal Experiences 5–6 May42, n. d., hereinafter cited as *Ferrell; Jenkins;* H. W. Baldwin, "The Fourth Marines at Corregidor," *MC Gazette*, in 4 parts November 1946–February 1947, hereinafter cited as *Baldwin Narrative; Fall of the Philippines;* K. Uno, *Corregidor: Isle of Delusion* (China: Press Bureau, Imperial Japanese Army Headquarters, September 1942) (located at OCMH), hereinafter cited as *Isle of Delusion.*

[26] 4th Mar R–2 Jnl, 8Dec41–3May42, last entry.

east of North Point, which had never revealed their position, also escaped the destructive fires. Wire lines to command posts were ripped apart and could not be repaired; "command could be exercised and intelligence obtained only by use of foot messengers, which medium was uncertain under the heavy and continuous artillery and air bombardment." [27]

Along the northern side of the hogback ridge that traced its course from Malinta Hill to the bend in Corregidor's tail, Company A and the reserves of 1/4 waited doggedly for the Japanese to come. There was no sharp division between unit defense sectors, and the men of the various units intermingled as the bombardment demolished prepared positions. Along the battered base and sides of Malinta Hill, a special target for enemy fire, were the men of Lieutenant Jenkins' Reserve Company. Next to them, holding the shoreline up to Infantry Point, was a rifle platoon organized from 1/4's Headquarters Company; Captain Lewis H. Pickup, the company commander, held concurrent command of Company A, having taken over on the death of Major Lang. The 1st Platoon under First Lieutenant William F. Harris defended the beaches from Infantry to Cavalry Points, the landing site selected in Japanese pre-assault plans. Master Gunnery Sergeant John Mercurio's 2d Platoon's positions rimmed the gentle curve of land from Cavalry to North Point. Extending from North Point to the tip of the island's tail were the foxholes and machine-gun emplacements of First Sergeant Noble W. Well's 3d Platoon.

Positions along the top of the steep southern face of the East Sector's dominant ridge were occupied by the platoons of Company B under First Lieutenant Alan S. Manning, who had taken over when Captain Brown was wounded.[28] The machine guns and 37mm's of Captain Noel O. Castle's Company D were emplaced in commanding positions along the beaches on both sides of the island; the company's mortars were in firing positions near Malinta Hill.

At about 2100 on 5 May, sensitive sound locators on Corregidor picked up the noise of many barges warming up their motors near Limay on Bataan's east coast. Warning of an impending landing was flashed to responsible higher headquarters, but the lack of wire communication kept the word from reaching the men in the foxholes along the beaches of the East Sector. They did not need any additional advice of enemy intentions anyway, since the whole regiment had been on an all-out alert every night for a month, momentarily expecting Japanese landing barges to loom out of the darkness. The men of 1/4 had withstood some pretty stiff shellings, too, as they waited, but nothing to compare with the barrage that began falling on the beach defenses manned by Harris' 1st Platoon at about 2245.

The Japanese had begun to deliver the short preparatory bombardment designed to cover the approach of Colonel Sato's assault waves which was called for in their operation plan. If Sato's boat groups adhered to their schedule they would rendezvous and head in for the beaches just as the artillery fire lifted and shifted to the west, walling off the landing area from American reinforcement efforts. The regiment would be ashore before the moon rose near midnight to give Corregidor's gunners a clear target. In two respects the

[27] *USAFFE–USFIP Rept*, 77.

[28] LtCol R. F. Jenkins ltr to CMC, 30Oct56.

plan miscarried, and for a while it was touch and go for the assault troops.

The artillery shoot went off on schedule, but Sato's first waves, transporting most of his *1st Battalion*, were carried by an unexpectedly strong incoming tide hundreds of yards to the east of the designated landing beaches. Guides in the oncoming craft were unable to recognize landmarks in the darkness, and from water level the tail of the island looked markedly uniform as smoke and dust raised by the shelling obscured the shoreline. The *61st Regiment's 2d Battalion*, slated to follow close on the heels of the *1st*, was delayed and disrupted by faulty boat handling and tide currents until it came in well out of position and under the full light of the moon.

When the Japanese preparatory fires lifted shortly after 2300, the troops along the East Sector beaches spotted the scattered landing craft of the *1st Battalion, 61st* heading in for the beaches at North Point. The few remaining searchlights illuminated the barges, and the island's tail erupted with fire. Enemy artillery knocked out the searchlights almost as soon as they showed themselves; but it made little difference, since streams of tracer bullets from beach defense machine guns furnished enough light for the Scout 75's near North Point and 1/4's 37's to find targets. A Japanese observer on Bataan described the resulting scene as "sheer massacre," [29] but the enemy *1st Battalion* came in close enough behind its preparation to get a good portion of its men ashore. Although the Japanese infantrymen overwhelmed Mercurio's 2d Platoon, the fighting was fierce and the enemy casualties in the water and on the beach were heavy. Colonel Sato, who landed with the first waves, sorely needed his *2d Battalion's* strength.

This straggling battalion which began heading shoreward about midnight suffered much more damage than the first waves. The remaining coast defense guns and mortars on Corregidor, backed up by the fire of Forts Hughes and Drum, churned the channel between Bataan and Corregidor into a surging froth, whipped by shell fragments and explosions. The moon's steady light revealed many direct hits on barges and showed heavily burdened enemy soldiers struggling in the water and sinking under the weight of their packs and equipment. Still, some men reached shore and Colonel Sato was able to organize a drive toward his objective, Malinta Hill.

Individual enemy soldiers and machine-gun crews infiltrated across Kindley Field and through the rubble of torn barbed wire, blasted trees, and crater-pocked ground to Denver Battery, a sandbagged antiaircraft gun position which stood on relatively high ground south of Cavalry Point. The American gunners, whose weapons were out of action as a result of the bombardment, were unable to beat back the encroaching Japanese who established themselves in a commanding position with fields of fire over the whole approach route to the landing beaches. Captain Pickup's first word that the Japanese had seized Denver Battery came when he sent one of Company D's weapons platoon leaders, Marine Gunner Harold M. Ferrell, to establish contact with the battery's defenders. Ferrell and one of his men found the battery alive with enemy soldiers digging in and setting up automatic weapons. Ferrell immediately went back to his defense area west of Infantry Point and

[29] Quoted in *Isle of Delusion*, 17.

brought up some men to establish a line "along the hogsback to prevent the enemy from coming down on the backs of the men on the beaches." [30]

Pickup came up shortly after Gunner Ferrell got his men into position and considered pulling Lieutenant Harris' platoon out of its beach defenses to launch an attack against the enemy. After a conference with Harris the company commander decided to leave the 1st Platoon in position. Japanese landing craft were still coming in, and the platoon's withdrawal would leave several hundred yards of beach open. The fact that enemy troops were ashore had been communicated to Lieutenant Colonel Beecher's CP just inside Malinta Tunnel's east entrance, and small groups of men, a squad or so at a time, were coming up to build on the line in front of Denver Battery. The enemy now fired his machine guns steadily, and intermittent but heavy shellfire struck all along the roads from Malinta to Denver. Casualties were severe throughout the area.

By 0130 surviving elements of 1/4 on the eastern tip of the island were cut off completely from the rest of the battalion. Beecher was forced to leave men in position on both shores west of Denver Battery to prevent the enemy landing behind his lines. All the men who could be spared from the beaches were being sent up to the defensive position astride the ridgeline just west of Denver, but the strength that could be assembled there amounted to little more than two platoons including a few Philippine Scouts from the silenced antiboat guns in 1/4's sector. No exact figures reveal how many Japanese were ashore at this time or how many casualties the *61st Infantry's* assault companies had suffered, but it was plain that the enemy at Denver Battery outnumbered the small force trying to contain them, and Japanese snipers and infiltrating groups soon began to crop up in the rear of Pickup's position.

The situation clearly called for the commitment of additional men in the East Sector. Colonel Howard had made provision for this soon after getting word of the landing attempt. He alerted Schaeffer's command of two companies first, but held off committing Williams' battalion until the situation clarified itself. There was no guarantee that the Japanese would accommodate the 4th Marines by landing all their troops in the East Sector; in fact, there was a general belief among the men manning the defenses which commanded the ravines leading to Topside that the East Sector landing was not the main effort and that the enemy would be coming in against West and Middle Sector beaches.[31] Complicating the entire problem of command in the confused situation during the early morning hours of 6 May was the fact that only runners could get word of battle progress to Beecher's and Howard's CP. And any runner, or for that matter any man, who tried to make the 1,000-yard journey from the Denver line to the mouth of Malinta Tunnel stood a good chance of never completing his mission. The area east of Malinta Hill was a killing ground as Schaeffer's men soon found out when they made their bid to reach Denver Battery.

[30] *Ferrell*, 1.

[31] *Hayes Rept*, Statement of LCdr E. M. Wade, 65. The *general* existence of this belief was questioned by one survivor. *Jackson*.

THE COMMITMENT OF THE RESERVE [32]

In Government Ravine the 4th Marines' reserve companies saw and heard the machine guns along the East Sector beaches hammering at the Japanese landing craft. Major Schaeffer's command was already standing by to move out, and near 2400 Companies O and P filed down the trail and started for Malinta. There was little confusion, for the men had rehearsed their movements often. Crossing Bottomside by means of a tank trap which protected them from enemy shellfire, they moved into Malinta Tunnel where company and platoon commanders supervised the distribution of machine-gun ammunition and grenades cached there for just such an emergency. Volunteers from the Navy and Marine headquarters installations joined the companies to serve as ammunition carriers "although they were neither officially or morally obligated to do so." [33]

Major Schaeffer reported to Colonel Howard and received his instructions; he was to take his men out into the East Sector and counterattack the Japanese posision. At 0200 the companies began to move out of the oppressive heat and foul air of the crowded main tunnel onto the deeply cratered roads which led to Denver.[34] Lieutenant Hogaboom's Company P was in the lead, following the left fork of the road behind its guide, Captain Golland L. Clark, Jr., the 1st Battalion Adjutant. As the last platoon of the company cleared the tunnel it was diverted to a vicious fire fight raging on the right of the Marine line by an officer who had come back seeking reinforcements. Several enemy machine guns had been set up near the base of a stone water tower forward of Denver Battery and to the right front of the Marine positions. The platoon, in common with most of the rest of the units that tried to reduce this strong point, was chopped to pieces by interlocking bands of machine-gun fire.

On Clark's order, Hogaboom deployed his remaining two platoons in line of skirmishers once they were well clear of the tunnel. The advancing line made contact with Lieutenant Harris and the remnants of Company A's 1st Platoon holding the left of the Denver defensive position and tied in with them. Hogaboom found that his right flank was open; Captain Chambers' Company O which was to have followed him out of the tunnel and come up on his right was not to be found.

Chambers' men had left the tunnel all right, but almost immediately after the company column cleared the entrance bright flares were seen going up over the Japanese position. Chambers and his 1st Platoon leader, Quartermaster Clerk Frank W. Ferguson, concluding that the flares were a signal to the artillery on Bataan, passed the word along the line to look for the nearest shelter. The guess on

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[32] Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *USAFFE–USFIP Rept; 14th Army Rept; Howard Rept; Ferguson; Ferrell; Hogaboom; Jenkins; Baldwin Narrative; Isle of Delusion; Fall of the Philippines.*

[33] *Ferguson*, 14.

[34] By the time the Japanese landed, the only road into the East Sector was that which led through Malinta Tunnel. The road cut out of the side of the hill on the north had been completely demolished, and Col Howard, looking for an alternate route of approach, had discovered shortly before the landing that enemy artillery had blown a deep, ravine-like depression in the southern circling road that rendered it impassable to organized troop movement. *Howard Interview.*

the flares was right, and Ferguson's platoon was fortunate in taking its shelling in an area where the Japanese had provided deep bomb craters. The platoon came through with only eight casualties. As soon as the bombardment lifted, Ferguson moved toward Denver until he was forced to deploy by heavy machine-gun and mortar fire. He looked for the 3d Platoon to come up on his right according to plan, but only its commander, Quartermaster Sergeant John E. Haskin, and five men appeared, the rest had been lost in the shelling. Captain Chambers sent up the reserve platoon, which was in even worse shape, having been caught in the open near the tunnel entrance. Quartermaster Clerk Herman L. Snellings had only four survivors alive and unwounded.

Company O now contained but one platoon and had not yet made its attack.

Major Schaeffer established control over the scattered groups of men from the 1st Battalion and the reserve and launched three separate counterattacks on the dug-in Japanese. Sometimes the men would get up the slopes leading to the battery gun pits, but they were always driven back, fewer in number each time. On the right flank, Sergeant Major John H. Sweeney and Sergeant Haskin took advantage of the water tower's battered elevation to hurl grenades down on the machine guns that were holding up the advance; Haskin was killed trying to get more grenades up to Sweeney, and Sweeney was picked off after he had knocked out at least one of the guns. Ferguson, who knew and had served with both these long-time regulars, wrote their simple epitaph:

> They were very close friends in life and it was most fitting that they should go out together.[35]

[35] *Ferguson*, 18.

Many close friends died that morning in the darkness and choking dust as the Japanese and the Americans and Filipinos faced each other from positions less than forty yards apart. Some men cut off behind the enemy lines still kept firing at occasional landing craft that were coming in to reinforce Sato. Hogaboom could see the tracers of a single .50 caliber and felt that "the bullets smacking into the armor of the barges sounded like rivet hammers rattling away." [36] Every movement of the Japanese boats which stood in number offshore was counted as an attempt at landing, although many of them were improvised gunboats whose mission was protecting and supporting the landing craft. But detachments of Sato's force kept coming in all night, and one enemy lieutenant, probably a member of one of the *61st's* supporting units, gave a vivid description of the helpless feeling of the men in the barges as they were caught in Corregidor's fire:

> American high powered machine guns poured a stream of bullets on us from all directions. Rifle fire added to the hail of death. Our men who were huddled in the center of the boat were all either killed or wounded. Those who clung to the sides were hit by shells that pierced the steel plating. The boat had already sprung several leaks when we finally came within landing distance of Corregidor. Desperately I gave the signal and led the charge against the shore defenses. I don't remember how many men responded. I know I heard only a small chorus. In that mad dash for shore many were drowned as they dropped into the water mortally wounded. Many were killed outright . . . . If it had not been for the fact that it was the dark hour before the dawn, pitch black, I doubt if any of us would be alive today to tell the story.[37]

However heavy the Japanese casualties were, they did not measurably weaken the

[36] *Hogaboom*, 16.

[37] Quoted in *Isle of Delusion*, 34.

firepower of the Denver position. Each attack by Schaeffer's men thinned the Marine line still more. Lost were officers and NCOs whose leadership was vital to the operations of mixed units such as those which held the Japanese at bay. Captain Castle of Company D was killed trying to silence a machine gun, and many small unit leaders who still held their place in line were badly wounded. The situation was so desperate that Colonel Howard could no longer hold his last reserves out of the action. He ordered the 4th Battalion to move into the East Sector and join the embattled defense line.

THE 4TH BATTALION IN ACTION [38]

Major Williams' 4th Battalion had been alerted early in the night's action, and he had ordered the issue of extra ammunition and grenades. At about 0100 he got the word to move the battalion into Malinta Tunnel and stand by. The sailors proceeded cautiously down the south shore road, waited for an enemy barrage which was hitting in the dock area to lift, and then dashed across to the tunnel entrance. In the sweltering corridor the men pressed back against the walls as hundreds of casualties, walking wounded and litter cases, streamed in from the East Sector fighting. The hospital laterals were filled to overflowing, and the doctors, nurses, and corpsmen tended to the stricken men wherever they could find room to lay a man down. At 0430, Colonel Howard ordered Williams to take his battalion out of the tunnel and attack the Japanese at Denver Battery.

The companies moved out in column. About 500 yards out from Malinta they were caught in a heavy shelling that sharply reduced their strength and temporarily scattered the men. The survivors reassembled and moved toward the fighting in line of skirmishers. Companies Q and R, commanded by two Army officers, Captains Paul C. Moore and Harold E. Dalness, respectively, moved in on the left to reinforce the scattered groups of riflemen from Companies A and P who were trying to contain the Japanese in the broken ground north of Denver Battery. The battery position itself was assigned to Company T (Lieutenant Bethel B. Otter, USN), and two platoons of Company S, [39] originally designated the battalion reserve, were brought up on the extreme right where Lieutenant Edward N. Little, USN, was to try to silence the enemy machine guns near the water tower. The bluejackets filled in the gaps along the line—wide gaps, for there was little that could be called a firm defensive line left—and joined the fire fight.

The lack of adequate communications prevented Colonel Howard from exercising active tactical direction of the battle in the East Sector. The unit commanders on the ground, first Captain Pickup, then Major Schaeffer, and finally Major Williams made the minute-to-minute decisions that close combat demanded. By the time Williams' battalion had reorganized and moved up into the Marine forward positions, Schaeffer's command was

[38] Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *USAFFE-USFIP Rept; 14th Army Rept; Howard Rept; Brook; Dalness;* SSgt C. E. Downing, Personal Experiences 5-6-May42, n. d.; *Ferguson; Ferrell; Hogaboom; Jenkins; Baldwin Narrative; Isle of Delusion; Fall of the Philippines.*

[39] *Saalman 1956.*

practically nonexistent. Williams, by mutual consent (Schaeffer was senior), took over command of the fighting since he was in a far better position to get the best effort out of his bluejackets when they attacked.[40]

At dawn Major Williams moved along the front, telling his officers to be ready to jump off at 0615. The company and platoon command posts were right up on the firing line and there were no reserves left; every officer and man still able to stand took part in the attack. On the left the Japanese were driven back 200–300 yards before Williams sent a runner to check the advance of Moore and Dalness; the right of the line had been unable to make more than a few yards before the withering fire of the Denver and water tower defenses drove the men to the deck. The left companies shifted toward Denver to close the gap that had opened while the men on the right tried to knock out the Japanese machine guns and mortars. Lieutenant Otter was killed while leading an attack, and his executive, Captain Calvin E. Chunn, took over; Chunn was wounded soon after as Company T charged a Japanese unit which was setting up a field piece near the water tower.[41] Lieutenant Little was hit in the chest and Williams sent a Philippine Scout officer, First Lieutenant Otis E. Saalman, to take over Company S.

The Marine mortars of 1/4, 3-inch Stokes without sights, were not accurate enough to support Williams' attack. He had to order them to cease fire when stray rounds fell among his own men, who had closed to within grenade range of the Japanese. Robbed of the last supporting weapons that might have opened a breach in the Denver position, the attack stalled completely. Major Schaeffer sent Warrant Officer Ferguson, who had succeeded to command of Company O when Captain Chambers was wounded, to Colonel Howard's CP to report the situation and request reinforcements. Ferguson, like Schaeffer and many of the survivors of 1/4 and the reserve, was a walking wounded case himself. By the time Ferguson got back through the enemy shelling to Malinta at 0900, Williams had received what few reinforcements Howard could muster. Captain Herman H. Hauck and 60 men of the 59th Coast Artillery, assigned by General Moore to the 4th Marines, had come up and Williams sent them to the left flank to block Japanese snipers and machine-gun crews infiltrating along the beaches into the rear areas.

At about 0930 men on the north flank of the Marine line saw a couple of Japanese tanks coming off barges near Cavalry Point, a move that spelled the end on Corregidor. The tanks were in position to advance within a half hour, and, just as the men in front of Denver Battery spotted them, enemy flares went up again and artillery salvoes crashed down just forward of the Japanese position. Some men began to fall back, and though Williams and the surviving leaders tried to halt the withdrawal, the shellfire prevented them from regaining control. At 1030 Williams sent a message to the units on the left flank to fall back to the ruins of a concrete trench which stood just forward of the entrance to Malinta Tunnel. The next thirty minutes witnessed a scene of utter confusion as the Japanese opened up on the retreating men with rifles, mortars, machine guns, and mountain howitzers. Flares signalled

[40] Mize ltr, *op. cit.*
[41] *Chunn.*

the artillery on Bataan to increase its fire, and a rolling barrage swung back and forth between Malinta and Denver, demolishing any semblance of order in the ranks of the men straining to reach the dubious shelter of the trench. "Dirt, rocks, trees, bodies, and debris literally filled the air," [42] and pitifully few men made it back to Malinta.

Williams, who was wounded, and roughly 150 officers and men, many of them also casualties, gathered in the trench ruins to make a stand. The Japanese were less than three hundred yards from their position and enemy tanks could be seen moving up to outflank their line on the right. The Marine major, who had been a tower of strength throughout the hopeless fight, went into the tunnel at 1130 to ask Howard for antitank guns and more men. But the battle was over: General Wainwright had made the decision to surrender.

SURRENDER [43]

Colonel Howard had personally reported the landing of the Japanese tanks to General Wainwright at 1000. The USFIP commander, who had kept current on the situation in the East Sector throughout the night's fighting, made the fateful decision to surrender. He later related that "it was the terror that is vested in a tank that was the deciding factor," for he "thought of the havoc that even one of these could wreak if it nosed into the tunnel, where lay our helpless wounded . . ." [44] He did not believe, nor did any other officer he consulted, that the defenses outside Malinta could last more than the remaining hours of the day, and he set the hour of surrender for noon in order "to avoid the horrors which would have accrued had I let the fight go on until dark." [45]

The order to surrender was passed to the troops on Topside and Middleside along with instructions to destroy all weapons larger than .45 caliber. The sickened men of the 4th Marines' 2d and 3d Battalions, who had been forced to stand by helplessly as they heard and watched the battle to the east, carried the order even further, smashing their rifles against the rocks. Veterans of fighting in World War I and a dozen "banana wars" stood unashamedly crying as they were told they would have to surrender. Inside Malinta, Colonel Howard ordered the regimental and national colors of the 4th Marines burned to prevent their falling into enemy hands. Two 1st Battalion officers, Captain Clark and Lieutenant Manning, a field music, and an interpreter were selected to carry Wainwright's flag of truce to the Japanese. As the white flag was carried out of the tunnel, Major Williams ordered survivors of the East Sector fighting to move inside the hill and take shelter from the Japanese bombardment which still was falling.

Captain Clark's party passed the last American outpost; the music sounded off and Manning waved a pole which bore a piece of sheeting. The enemy infantrymen, who had been given special instructions regarding the reception of flags of truce, did not fire, and Clark was taken to the senior Japanese officer on the island who contacted Bataan and arranged for a parley on the peninsula with General Homma. When Wainwright, accompa-

[42] *Dalness*, 18.

[43] Unless otherwise noted the material in this section is derived from *USAFFE-USFIP Rept; 14th Army Rept; Howard Rept; Baldwin Narrative; Fall of the Philippines; Wainwright's Story.*

[44] *Wainwright's Story*, 119.

[45] *Ibid.*, 186.

denied by a few senior officers and aides, walked out of the tunnel and up the long slope toward Kindley Field, he saw dead and dying men on every hand, a grim record of the ferocity of the fighting in the past 12 hours.

No complete figures exist for the casualties suffered by either side on 5–6 May; estimates of the Japanese losses range from 900 to 4,000.[46] The strait between Bataan and Corregidor was heavily dotted with enemy bodies, and American prisoners on Corregidor estimated that they helped collect and cremate the remains of hundreds of Japanese soldiers.[47] The detailed losses of the 4th Marines will probably never be known because of the joint-service nature of the regiment at the time of battle and the scarcity of contemporary records. The casualties of Marines alone are known, however, and they may be considered indicative of the fate of soldiers and sailors who served with them. In the whole Philippine campaign the regiment had 315 officers and men killed, 15 missing in action presumed dead, and 357 men wounded;[48] the great majority of these casualties occurred during the battle for Corregidor.

The bloody battle for the island fortress did not end with Wainwright's decision to surrender. The Japanese went right ahead with their assault plan and preparatory bombardments, paying no heed to the white flags displayed on all the islands in the bay. Eighty-eight tons of bombs were dropped on 6 May, a good part of them after the surrender.[49] Wainwright, who had released his southern Philippine commanders to MacArthur's control before he attempted to meet the enemy commander, tried to surrender only the fortified islands to the Japanese. He was rebuffed coldly by Homma's emissary and told that the Japanese knew that he was commander of all the forces in the Philippines and that they would not accept his surrender unless it meant the capitulation of every man in his command, everywhere in the islands. The American general, convinced that the Japanese would treat the men on the fortified islands as hostages, perhaps even massacre them if the fighting continued in the south, finally acceded to the enemy demand and broadcast a surrender message at midnight on 6 May to all his commanding officers. There was considerable dissension regarding this order, especially on islands where the Japanese had not made much effort to subdue the Philippine Army troops, but eventually most of the organized units of USFIP came out of the hills to lay down their arms. Wainwright felt, as did most of his advisors at the time, that the Japanese were quite capable of slaughtering the men surrendered on the fortified

[46] Most American survivors of the battle mention that they heard from the Japanese later in prison camp that the enemy had suffered almost 4,000 casualties in trying to take Corregidor. However, Japanese officers commenting on Dr. Morton's draft manuscript of *The Fall of the Philippines* wrote that the total casualties of the Japanese in the Corregidor operation between 14Apr–7May42 were 903. MilHistSec, SS, GHQ, FEC, Comments of Former Japanese Officers Regarding "The Fall of the Philippines," 19Apr42 (located at OCMH), Chap XXXI, 3.

[47] *Saalman 1956.* Saalman recalls having remarked to Maj Williams shortly after daybreak on 6 May, "I believe we could walk from Corregidor to Bataan over dead bodies." In light of the number of bodies that were collected and cremated, Saalman is convinced that the 903 figure supplied by the Japanese in commenting on the draft of *The Fall of the Philippines* reflects only enemy dead rather than total casualties.

[48] See Appendix D for Marine casualties.

[49] *Philippine AirOpsRec,* Plate 8.

islands if he did not insure a complete surrender of all his forces.

The struggle for control of Manila Bay finally ended on 7 May when the Japanese occupied the last of the island forts, but for most of the captured men "the fight for life had just begun." [50] Thousands succumbed in the next three years to brutal mistreatment, malnutrition, and disease in Japanese prison camps in the Philippines, in the enemy home islands, and in Manchuria. Two hundred and thirty-nine officers and men of the 4th Marine Regiment died in enemy hands.

CONCLUSION

The battle for Corregidor was bitter and confused; relatively few men survive who fought in the East Sector through the night and morning of 5–6 May 1942. Hundreds of well-trained infantrymen in positions within a mile or so of Malinta Hill were only spectators and auditors of the fighting. The poorest-trained elements of the 4th Marines constituted the vital mobile reserve. On the surface and in hasty consideration it would seem that the tactics of the beach defense left much to be desired.

Corregidor, however, was not a fortress with only one entrance. The beaches fronting the ravines defended by 2/4 and 3/4 led directly to the island's major defensive installations. The threat of amphibious assault existed all around the island's perimeter, but especially along the northern and western shores. The Japanese laid down preparatory fires all along the north side of the island, devoting as much attention to James Ravine and Bottomside west of Malinta as they did the eastern beaches. Until the night of 5 May there was no compelling reason to believe that the East Sector would draw the first assault. And even after the enemy landed at North Point the very present threat to western Corregidor existed and could not be ignored. To meet it, a number of Army units were alerted to back up the positions of 2/4 and 3/4.[51]

The problem which Colonel Howard faced of when, where, and in what strength to commit the reserves available to him was a classic one for commanders at all troop levels. If he committed all his reserve at one time and in the area of greatest existing threat, he distinctly increased the vulnerability of other sectors to enemy attack. If he committed only part of his reserve and retained the capability of reinforcing against further attacks, he stood the chance of not using enough men to have a decisive effect in any sector. The decision to commit the reserve piecemeal reflected the regiment's estimate of the enemy's capabilities and intentions in light of their actions.[52] The Japanese, although opposed by a relatively small force, did not or could not vigorously pursue their advance after reaching the Denver position. The continued presence of numerous small craft off Corregidor's north shore indicated a possible, even probable, early attempt at a second landing. Under these circumstances the East Sector assault might well be a secondary effort which had stalled, with the enemy's main attack still to come. Actually this was the Japanese plan, with the difference that the second landing was to follow the first after a day's interval

[50] *Jenkins*, 19.

[51] Col F. P. Pyzick ltr to CMC, 30Oct56.

[52] *Howard Interview.*

rather than as soon as the Marines expected.

In large part the 4th Marines' reserve strength was already committed on 5 May. The Japanese preparatory fires, especially those which were laid on areas in plain sight of Bataan, made movement by any body of troops extremely difficult—witness the fate of Company O. The bombardment had the effect of tying the regiment to its defenses. The trained infantrymen in its ranks were kept where they could do the most to bolster the crucial beach positions.[53] If any sizable number of these men had been withdrawn from the beaches to form a reserve, it is questionable whether the remaining men could have withstood any enemy assault. Once the Japanese began to bombard Corregidor in earnest there was no such thing as a strong beach defense position; the very fury of the bombardment, destroying as it did most of the prepared defenses and demolishing the major supporting weapons, placed a high premium on having the best infantrymen at the point where their value would be greatest—the beaches.

The fall of Corregidor was inevitable; the garrison simply did not have enough food to hold out until relief could arrive. Although the enemy, primarily for prestige and propaganda reasons, choose to assault the island, they could easily have starved its defenders into submission. When the Japanese did make their attack they paid a high price for their haste, but extracted as great a one from the defenders. In the immediate tactical sense, however, the enemy artillery was the victor in the siege and fall of Corregidor; no defending force could have withstood its devastatingly accurate bombardment.

Although it was a defeat, the battle of Corregidor is marked down in the annals of the 4th Marines as a fight to be proud of. Those who fought and died in its ranks, whatever their service of origin, were, if only for a brief moment, Corregidor Marines.

[53] *Ibid.*

PART V

Decision at Midway

Setting the Stage: Early Naval Operations[1]

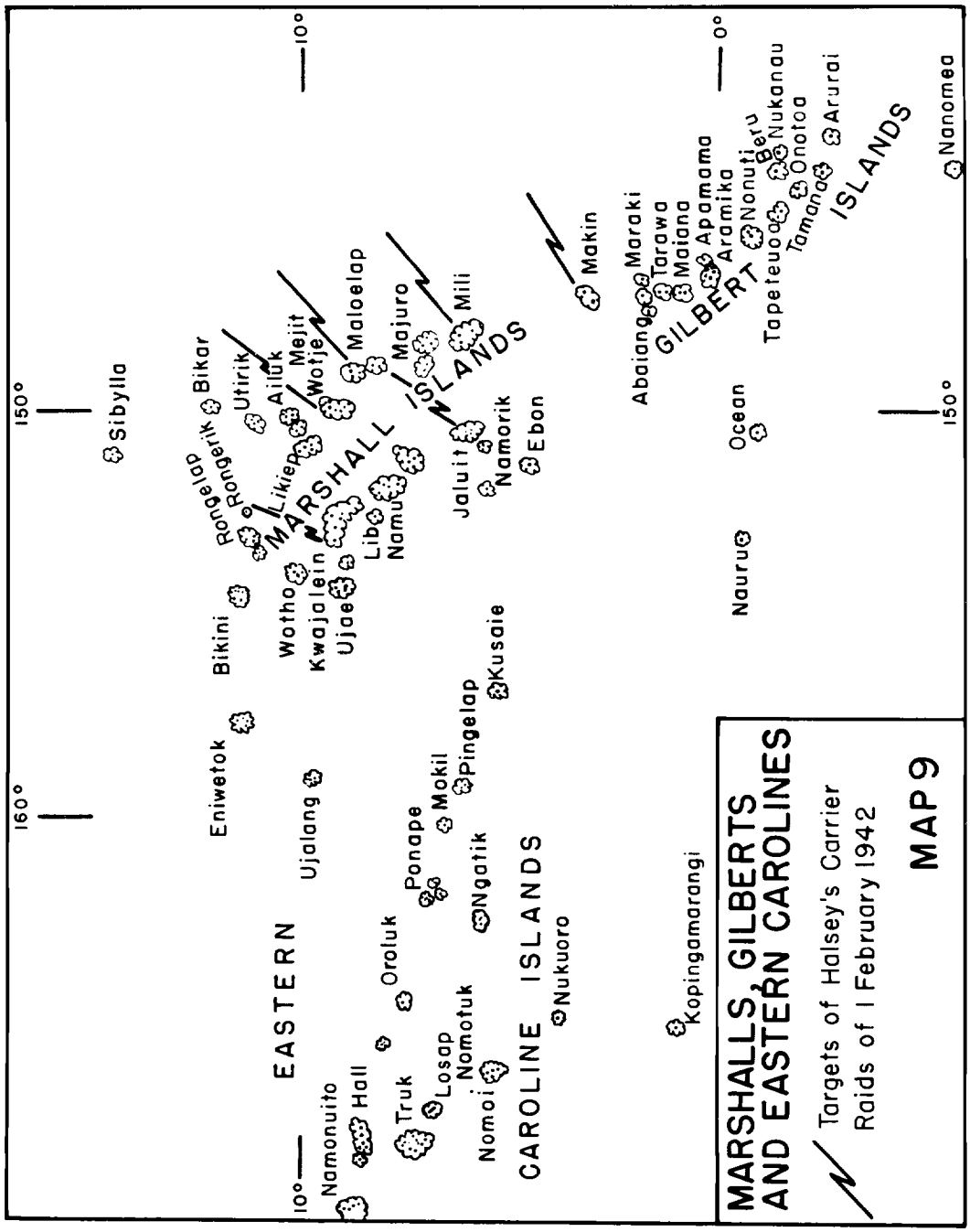
Early in January 1942 the U. S. Pacific Fleet was looking for a way to strike back at the Japanese; and advocates of the fast carrier force, believing their case ironically had been proven by the Japanese at Pearl Harbor, were ready to test their theories.[2] But first there were some fences to mend. The all-important communications chain to Australia and New Zealand was rather tenuous, and the bulk of the Navy had to be used for escort duty until reinforcements could be put ashore to bolster some of the stations along the route.

One of the most important links in this communication chain was Samoa. The worst was feared for this area when the Pago Pago naval station was shelled by a Japanese submarine on 11 January while the 2d Marine Brigade (composed for the most part of the 8th Marines and the 2d Defense Battalion) still was en route to the islands from San Diego. But on 23 January after the Marines' four transports and one fleet cargo vessel were delivered safely to Samoa, Vice Admiral William F. Halsey's *Enterprise* force, together with a new fast carrier force commanded by Rear Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher and formed around the *Yorktown*, were released for the raiding actions that the fleet was anxious to launch.

While the 2d Marine Brigade unloaded at Samoa on 23 January, the Japanese landed far to the west at Rabaul where the small Australian garrison was quickly overrun. Although the importance of Rabaul to the Japanese was not realized at once, it was soon clear that from the Bismarcks the enemy could launch an attack through the Coral Sea toward Australia and New Zealand. This threat tended to increase rather than diminish the danger to Samoa. It was reasoned that a Japanese attack there would precede a strike at Australia or New Zealand to block U. S. assistance to the Anzac areas. Japanese occupation of Makin Island in the Gilberts seemed to point toward Samoa, and naval commanders held that the best insurance against subsequent

[1] Unless otherwise noted the material in Part V is derived from *Rising Sun in the Pacific;* S. E. Morison, *Coral Sea, Midway and Submarine Actions, May 1942–August 1942: History of United States Naval Operations in World War II* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1949), hereinafter cited as *Coral Sea and Midway; U. S. & Sea Power;* M. Fuchida and M. Okumiya, *Midway: The Battle That Doomed Japan* (Annapolis: U. S. Naval Institute, 1955), hereinafter cited as *Battle That Doomed Japan; Marines at Midway;* "The Japanese Story of the Battle of Midway," *ONI Review*, May 1947, hereinafter cited as *ONI Review.*

[2] "There was still much difference of opinion [about the effectiveness of the carrier striking force] until 7 Dec 1941 when the Japanese attack took the controversy out of the laboratory class . . . Japan knifed us with our own invention." Capt Miles R. Browning, USN, "The Fast Carrier Force," *MC Gazette*, June 1946, 19.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Maloelap
MARSHALL ISLANDS
Majuro
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GILBERT ISLANDS
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Onotoa
Tamana
Arurai
Nanomea
Ocean
Nauru
EASTERN CAROLINE ISLANDS
Namonuito
Hall
Oroluk
Truk
Losap
Nomotuk
Nomoi
Ponape
Mokil
Ngatik
Pingelap
Nukuoro
Kopingamarangi
MARSHALLS, GILBERTS AND EASTERN CAROLINES
Targets of Halsey's Carrier Raids of 1 February 1942
MAP 9

moves would be a raid against the Marshalls, from which much of this Japanese action was mounted. Halsey's *Enterprise* force therefore set out to strike Wotje and Maleolap, seaplane bases in the Marshalls, while Fletcher prepared to attack Mili and Jaluit (also in the Marshalls) plus Makin with his *Yorktown* group. (See Map 9)

A submarine reconnaissance found the Marshalls lightly defended and spotted the largest concentration of Japanese planes and ships at Kwajalein Atoll in the center of the island group. Halsey decided to add this choice target to his list, and for the missions he divided Task Force 8 into three groups. The *Enterprise* with three destroyers would strike Wotje, Maloelap, and Kwajalein; Rear Admiral Raymond A. Spruance with the cruisers *Northampton* and *Salt Lake City* plus one destroyer would bombard Wotje; and Captain Thomas M. Shock in USS *Chester*, and with two destroyers, would shell Maloelap. The three southern atolls in the Marshalls group and Makin in the northern Gilberts would be attended to by Fletcher in the *Yorktown* with his independent command (TF 17) made up of the cruisers *Louisville* and *St. Louis* and four destroyers.

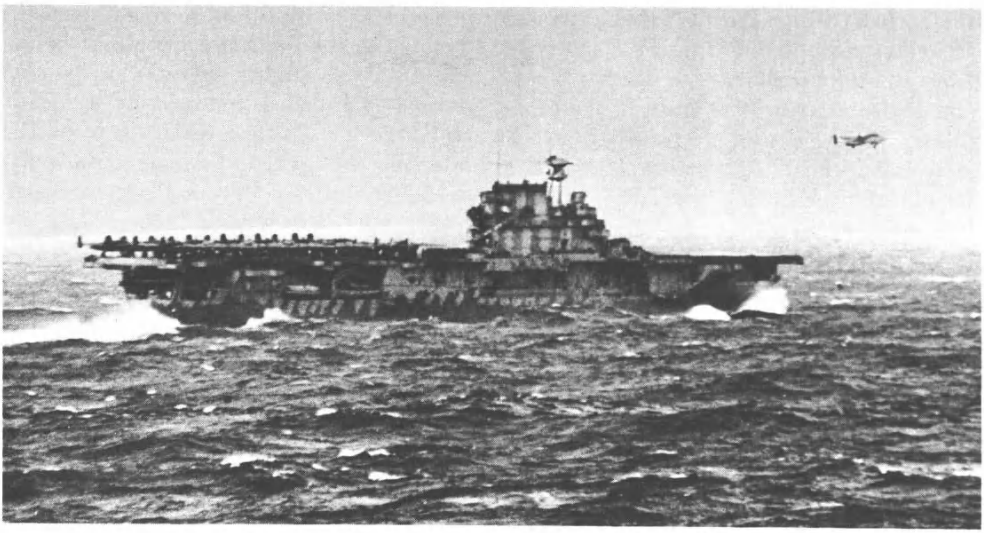
The twin attacks struck on 1 February. Halsey began launching at 0443 under a full moon when his carrier was just 36 miles from Wotje. Kwajalein, the main objective was 155 miles away. Nine torpedo bombers and 37 dive bombers led off the attack, the SBD's striking Roi air base on the northern end of the atoll and the torpedo bombers hitting Kwajalein Island across the lagoon.

At Kwajalein the hunting was better; but in spite of the fact that there was no fighter opposition, and that the reports brought back by pilots were enthusiastic, damage to the Japanese installations and shipping was slight. Five Wildcats shot down two Japanese planes over Maloelap, and nine SBD's that returned from Roi later sortied again and damaged some airfield installations. The surface bombardment, too, was disappointing, and the bombardment flagship, *Chester*, took a light bomb through her main deck and lost eight men killed and eleven wounded.

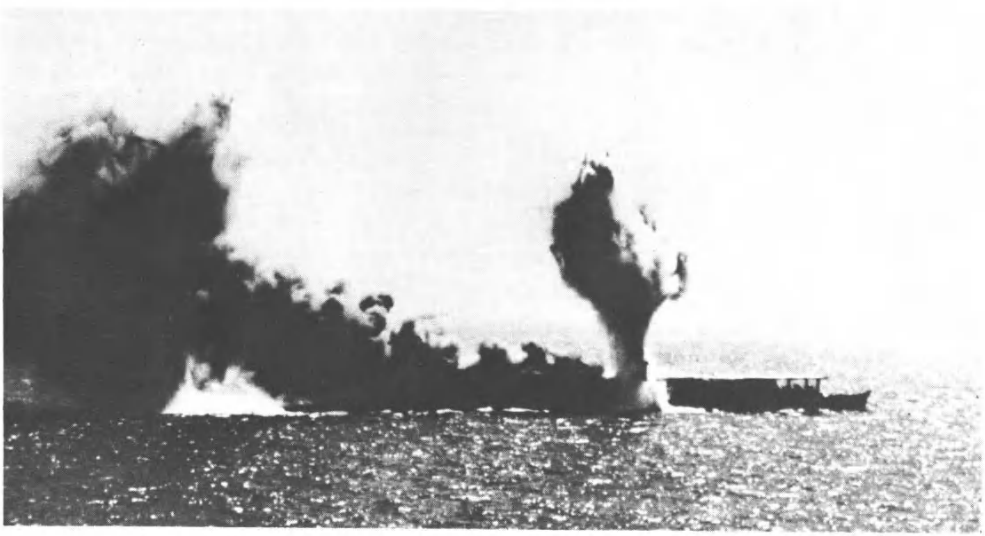
To the south, Fletcher had bad luck over Jaluit when his fliers found their targets concealed by thunder showers. Two Japanese ships off Jabor Town were hit, but not sunk, and the damage ashore was slight. A mine layer was hit at Makin, and damage at Mili was also slight.

Similar actions were continued in other areas of the Pacific to harass the Japanese and to provide at least one outlet for efforts to fight back at the enemy when the news from all other fronts was gloomy. Most notable were strikes in early March against Wake and Marcus Island, and the daring raid by planes of Admiral Wilson Brown's task force over New Guinea's 15,000-foot Owen Stanley Mountains to hit the Japanese newly moved into Lae and Salamaua. But in all cases actual damage to the enemy still failed to measure up to expectations, much less to the reports turned in by overenthusiastic aviators.

Most audacious and unorthodox of the attacks, of course, was that which launched Lieutenant Colonel James H. Doolittle and his Army raiders from the *Hornet's* deck to the 18 April Tokyo raid. Planned as "something really spectacular"—a proper retaliation for Pearl Harbor—the raid was designed more for its dramatic impact upon morale than for any other purpose. In that it was highly successful.



AN ARMY B-25, *one of Doolittle's Raiders, takes off from the deck of the carrier* Hornet *to participate in the first U. S. air raid on Japan. (USN 41197)*



JAPANESE CARRIER SHOHO, *dead in the water and smoking from repeated bomb and torpedo hits, was sunk by carrier planes in the Coral Sea Battle. (USN 17026)*

After security-shrouded planning and training, Doolittle's 16 B–25's left San Francisco on 2 April 1942 on board the *Hornet* which was escorted by cruisers *Vincennes* and *Nashville*, four destroyers, and an oiler. After a 13 April rendezvous with the *Enterprise* of Halsey's TF 16, the raiding party continued along the northern route toward the Japanese home islands.[3] Enemy picket boats sighted the convoy when it was more than 100 miles short of the intended launching range, and, with Doolittle's concurrence, Halsey launched the fliers at 0725 on 18 April while the *Hornet* bucked in a heavy sea 668 miles from the Imperial Palace in central Tokyo.[4]

Much of the raid's anticipated shock effect on Tokyo was lost by the coincidence of Doolittle's arrival over the city at about noon just as a Japanese air raid drill was completed. The Japanese, confused by the attack which followed their own maneuvers, offered only light opposition to the B–25's which skimmed the city at treetop level to drop their bombs on military targets. One plane which struck Kobe received no opposition, although two others over Nagoya and Osaka drew heavy fire from antiaircraft batteries; but none was lost over Japan.

Halsey managed to retire from the launching area with little difficulty, and both carriers returned to Pearl Harbor on 25 April. Although the raid did more to boost American morale than it did to damage Japanese military installations, more practical results came later. It allowed a Japanese military group which favored a further expansion of their territorial gains to begin execution of these ambitious plans, and this expansion effort led directly to the Battle of Midway which ". . . alone was well worth the effort put into this operation by . . . [those] . . . who had volunteered to help even the score." [5]

The first of Japan's planned expansion moves in the spring of 1942 aimed for control of the Coral Sea through seizure of the Southern Solomon Islands and Port Moresby on New Guinea as bases from which to knock out growing Allied air power in northeastern Australia. Seizure of New Caledonia, planned as part of the third step in the second major series of offensives, would complete encirclement of the Coral Sea. This would leave the U. S. communications route to the Anzac area dangling useless at the Samoan Islands; and later Japanese advances would push the U. S. Pacific Fleet back to Pearl Harbor and perhaps even to the west coast.

Characteristically, the Japanese plan called for an almost impossible degree of timing and coordination. It depended for success largely on surprise and on the U. S. forces behaving just as the Japanese hoped that they would. But this second element was largely corollary to the first, and, when surprise failed, the Japanese were shocked to discover that the U. S. fleet did not follow the script.

[3] Plans called for the bombers to land on friendly Chinese fields some 1,093 miles from Tokyo, and completion of this trip for the planes loaded initially with four 500-pound bombs and 1,140 gallons of gasoline required that they be launched within 500 miles of Tokyo.

[4] Although the picket boats were prompt with a warning, Japanese interception attempts were tardy. It was assumed that Navy planes, with a shorter range than B–25's, were on the carrier, and that the force could not strike Japan until the ships steamed for another day.

[5] *Rising Sun in the Pacific*, 398.

The Japanese anticipated resistance from a U. S. carrier task force known to be lurking somewhere to the south or southeast, but they expected to corner this force in the eastern Coral Sea with a pincers movement of carrier task forces of their own. Vice Admiral Takeo Takagi would skirt to the east of the Solomons with his *Striking Force* of heavy carriers *Shokaku* and *Zuikaku* and move in on the U. S. ships from that direction, while Rear Admiral Aritomo Goto's *Covering Force* built around the light carrier *Shoho* would close in from the northwest. Destruction of the northeast Australian airfields would follow this fatal pinch of the U. S. fleet, and then the *Port Moresby Invasion Group* could ply the southeastern coast of New Guinea with impunity.

But Japanese overconfidence enabled U. S. intelligence to diagnose this operation in advance, and Fletcher's Task Force 17 had steamed into the Coral Sea where he all but completed refueling before the first Japanese elements sortied from Rabaul. On 4 May Fletcher's *Lexington*, *Yorktown*, screening ships, and support vessels were joined by the combined Australian-American surface force under Rear Admiral J. C. Crace of the Royal Navy.

On the previous day the Japanese had started their operation (which they called "Mo") like any other routine land grab. A suitable invasion force, adequately supported, moved into the Southern Solomons, seized Tulagi without opposition[6] and promptly began setting up a seaplane base. There Fletcher's planes startled them next day with several powerful air strikes on the new garrison and on the Japanese ships still in the area. The U. S. carrier planes struck virtually unopposed,[7] but they caused little damage in proportion to the energy and ammunition they expended. This startling deviation from the "Mo" script caused the Japanese to initiate the remaining steps of the operation without further delay.

The Battle of the Coral Sea proved the first major naval engagement in history where opposing surface forces neither saw nor fired at each other.[8] Although both were eager to join battle, combat intelligence was so poor and aerial reconnaissance so hampered by shifting weather fronts that three days passed before the main forces found each other. But other things they did find led to a series of events on the 7th that might be described as a comedy of errors, although there was nothing particularly comical about them to those involved.

Early that morning an over-enthusiastic Japanese search pilot brought Takagi's entire striking air power down on the U. S. fleet tanker *Neosho* and her lone convoying destroyer, the USS *Sims*, by reporting them as a carrier and heavy cruiser respectively. This overwhelming attack sank the *Sims* and so damaged the *Neosho*

[6] Tulagi, with which U. S. forces were to get better acquainted, was the capital of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate. Officials and such garrison as existed had been amply forewarned and evacuated several days earlier. See Part VI of this volume.

[7] Experience to date had indicated to the Japanese that one of their landings constituted a *fait accompli* which no enemy would dare dispute, and the naval force supporting the landing had departed in order to get on with the war. Takagi's powerful Carrier Striking Force at this time lay north of Bougainville to keep beyond the range of Allied air search.

[8] "So many mistakes were made on both sides in this new mode of fighting that it might be called the Battle of Naval Errors." *Coral Sea and Midway*, 63.

that she had to be destroyed four days later.

Not to be outdone, the Americans reacted similarly a short time later to a scout plane's report of two Japanese carriers and four cruisers north of the Louisiades. Actually these craft were a subordinate enemy task group consisting of two old light cruisers and three converted gunboats. But more by good luck than good management, the attacking planes investigating the report sighted the Japanese *Covering Force*, then protecting the left flank of the *Port Moresby Invasion Group*, and concentrated on the *Shoho* to the virtual exclusion of her consorts. Against 93 aircraft of all types, the lone light carrier had no more chance than Task Force *Neosho-Sims* had against the Japanese, and her demise prompted the morale-boosting phrase, "Scratch one flattop!" [9]

As a result of these alarms and excursions, both commanding admirals had missed each other once again. By mid-afternoon, however, Takagi had a pretty good idea of the U. S. carriers' location and, shortly before nightfall, dispatched a bomber-torpedo strike against Fletcher. Thanks to a heavy weather front, these planes failed to find their target, and American combat air patrol intercepted them on their attempted return. In the confusion of dogfights, several Japanese pilots lost direction in the gathering darkness and made the error of attempting to land on the *Yorktown*.[10]

Early the following morning, U. S. search planes finally located the Japanese carriers at about the time the Japanese rediscovered the U. S. flattops. At last the stage was set for the big show.

Loss of the *Shoho* had cut the Japanese down to size. The opponents who slugged it out on 8 May 1942 were evenly matched, physically and morally, to a degree rarely found in warfare, afloat or ashore.[11] However, at the time the battle developed, the Japanese enjoyed the great tactical advantage of having their position shrouded by the same heavy weather front that had covered the U. S. carriers the previous afternoon, while Fletcher's force lay in clear tropical sunlight where it could be seen for many miles from aloft.

The attacking aircraft of both parties struck their enemy at nearly the same time (approximately 1100), passing each other en route.[12] The two Japanese carriers and their respective escorts lay about ten miles apart. As the *Yorktown's* planes orbited over the target preparatory to the attack, the *Zuikaku* and her screening force disappeared into a rain squall and were seen

[9] "Scratch one flattop! Dixon to Carrier, Scratch one flattop!" Voice radio report LCdr R. E. Dixon to USS *Lexington*, quoted in *Coral Sea and Midway*, 42. Action against the *Shoho* was U. S. Navy Air's first attack on an enemy carrier.

[10] Six planes in two groups of three each. Although they were recognized and fired on, all but one escaped. In this action the Japanese lost 9 planes in combat and 11 attempting night landings without benefit of homing devices, against U. S. loss of 2 fighters.

[11] A lucid summary of the several factors involved occurs in *Coral Sea and Midway*, 48. Fletcher's potential marked advantage in surface screening strength had been dissipated when, early on 7 May, he had dispatched Crace's force of cruisers and destroyers on a dash westward to intercept the enemy transport convoy expected to round the southeastern tip of New Guinea the next morning en route to attack Port Moresby. For analysis of this perhaps ill-judged move and its results, see *Ibid.*, 37–39.

[12] "The story current shortly after the battle, that the Japanese and American planes sighted but paid no attention to each other when passing on opposite courses, is not true." *Ibid.*, 52n.

no more during the brief action that followed, thereby escaping damage. So all U. S. planes that reached the scene concentrated on the *Shokaku*, but with disappointing results.

The *Yorktown's* torpedo bombers went in first, low and covered by fighters. But faulty technique and the wretched quality of U. S. torpedoes at this stage of the war combined to make this attack wholly ineffective: hits (if any) proved to be duds, the pilots launched at excessive ranges, and the torpedoes traveled so slowly that vessels unable to dodge had only to outrun them. The dive bombers, following closely, scored only two direct hits. But one of these so damaged the *Shokaku's* flight deck that she could no longer launch planes, although she still was capable of recovering them. Many of the *Lexington* planes, taking off ten minutes after those from *Yorktown*, got lost in the overcast and never found their targets. Those that did attack made the same mistakes the *Yorktown* fliers committed. The torpedoes proved wholly ineffective, and the damaging bomb hit on the *Shokaku* was something less than lethal despite the pilot's enthusiastic report that she was "settling fast." [13]

The Japanese did considerably better, thanks to vastly superior torpedoes and launching techniques. Two of these powerful "fish" ripped great holes in the *Lexington's* port side, and she sustained two direct bomb hits plus numerous near misses that sprang plates. The more maneuverable *Yorktown* dodged all of the torpedoes aimed at her and escaped all but one of the bombs. But this was an 800-pounder, and it exploded with such a spectacular display of flame and smoke that the Japanese pilots may be excused their claim that they had sunk her.

These events made up the Battle of the Coral Sea. It was all over by 1140.

Preoccupation of both forces with the flattops left opposing escort vessels unscathed, although the Japanese claimed to have left burning "one battleship or cruiser." [14] The Americans had sustained far the heavier damage and casualties, but had inflicted the greater tactical blow in knocking the *Shokaku* out of further offensive action while both U. S. carriers still were operational. Even the crippled *Lexington* had put out fires, shored up torpedo damage, and was capable of sustaining 25-knot speed and conducting nearly normal flight operations an hour after the battle ended.

The Japanese had lost the greater number of planes: 43 from all causes against 33 for the Americans. Their command, accepting at face value the ecstatic reports of their pilots that they had sunk both U. S. carriers, started the beat-up *Shokaku* for home, and in the afternoon commenced withdrawal from the area on orders from Rabaul. Admiral Takagi concurred with higher authority that it would be unwise to risk the vulnerable transport convoy in the narrowing waters of the western Coral Sea in face of the Allies' Australian airfields under cover of the whittled-down air complement of the single operational carrier. So the *Port Moresby Invasion Group* was ordered back to Rabaul.

But the final, tragic act of the drama remained. The gallant old *Lexington*, her wounds patched up and apparently fit to return to Pearl Harbor for permanent repairs, was suddenly racked by a terrible

[13] *Ibid.*, 51.

[14] *Ibid.*, 56.

explosion. This resulted only indirectly from enemy action: released gasoline fumes were ignited by sparks from a generator someone had carelessly left running. This set off what amounted to a chain reaction. The best efforts of her crew availed nothing, and at 1707 her skipper gave the order to abandon ship. This movement was carried out in the best order, without the loss of a man. At about 2000, nearly nine hours after the Japanese had withdrawn from the battle, torpedoes of her own escort put her under the waves forever.

Loss of the *Lexington* gave tactical victory to the Japanese. But by thwarting the invasion of Port Moresby, principal objective of the entire operation, the United States won strategic victory. At the time the enemy regarded this merely a postponement of their invasion plans; but events would prove that no Japanese seaborne invasion ever would near Port Moresby again.

Japanese Plans: Toward Midway and the North Pacific

Apparently ignoring this setback in the Coral Sea, Japan next turned toward the Central and North Pacific to launch the second complicated operation on her schedule. Admiral Yamamoto's two-pronged thrust at Midway and the Aleutians would automatically wipe clean the Coral Sea reverses and extend the outer perimeter of defense a safer distance from the home islands. And in the bargain, Yamamoto hoped, these attacks would lure forth the remainder of the U. S. fleet so that he could finish off the job he started on 7 December.[1]

The admiral accepted his aviators' reports that they had destroyed both U. S. carriers in the Coral Sea, and he therefore reasoned that the U. S. could bring no more than two flattops against him anywhere in the Pacific. Actually the Pearl Harbor yard had put the *Yorktown* back into operation in less than 48 hours so that the U. S. had three carriers, including the *Enterprise* and the *Hornet*. But against these Yamamoto had seven, and four seaplane carriers as well. His force also contained 11 battleships, including three of the latest type.[2] The U. S. had no battleships—or at least none in position for this upcoming battle.[3] And Yamamoto also had a substantial edge over the U. S. in cruisers, destroyers, and submarines. But the Japanese admiral squandered this lopsided advantage by dispersing his armada in widely scattered groups and opened himself for defeat in detail by the inferior U. S. Pacific Fleet.[4]

This Japanese fleet, divided for the complicated plan into five major forces, with some of these split into smaller groups, steamed eastward independently to carry out the various phases of the second step in this strategy for 1942. Planes from two light carriers in the *Second Mobile Force* would strike Dutch Harbor, Alaska on 3 June to confuse the U. S. com-

[1] *Battle That Doomed Japan*, Chaps 4 and 5, *passim*. The Aleutians phase was intended only as a diversion and to protect the northern flank of the Midway thrust, the plan being to withdraw the landing troops in September. *Ibid.*, 79.

[2] Adm Yamamoto flew his flag in the *Yamato*, the largest, fastest, and most heavily armed (18" guns) ship in the world.

[3] Although some of the battleships knocked out at Pearl Harbor had been put back in service, and three others had been brought around from the Atlantic, these ships were operating from the west coast as a final defense for the U. S.

[4] In view of subsequent developments, Morison describes Yamamoto's disposition as "cockeyed." *Coral Sea and Midway*, 77–79. See also *Battle That Doomed Japan*, 73–78. These Japanese authors, although sometimes carefully kind to Yamamoto (who was killed later in a Solomon Islands air action), are most often highly critical of the Japanese Navy and of war plans in general. Although the work is valuable and serious (*n. b.* the final two paragraphs of the book, at pages 247–248), the authors sometimes sound like men on the morning after, ruefully surveying the night before.

mand and to cover diversionary Japanese landings in the western Aleutians by the *Occupation Forces* for Adak-Attu and Kiska. Next the *Carrier Striking Force*, commanded by Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, would soften Midway with the planes from the big fleet carriers *Akagi*, *Kaga*, *Hiryu*, and *Soryu*,[5] and would then move on to strike the first blow at the U. S. Pacific Fleet if it challenged in a sortie from Pearl Harbor.

Admiral Yamamoto's *Main Body*, including three battleships and a light cruiser of his force plus the *Aleutian Screening Force* of four battleships and two light cruisers, then would go in for the kill against the U. S. Fleet. This engagement would be followed, after darkness on 5 June, by Vice Admiral Nobutake Kondo moving in to shell the U. S. base for two days. Then Kondo's convoyed *Transport Group* would approach to land the *Midway Occupation Force* of 5,000 ground troops. While crossing the Pacific, Yamamoto remained some hundreds of miles to the rear with his *Main Body*, awaiting word from the *Advance Expeditionary Force* of large fleet submarines already manning stations on the approaches to Pearl Harbor to warn about sorties of the American ships.

This ambitious plan might have worked, even though it was over-intricate. But again the Japanese had allowed their optimism and overconfidence to cast the U. S. Pacific Fleet in the role of a timid character actor cued for a vulnerable "walk-on" part. They begged the question of tactics before their plan moved to the operational stage. The U. S. Fleet, according to Japanese plans, would be steaming for the *Second Mobile Force* in the Aleutians, or would be vacillating in Hawaiian waters, until the strong *Carrier Striking Force* hit Midway and revealed the target of the main effort.[6] In either event nothing but the small Marine garrison force would stand in the way of the occupation of Midway, and the Japanese would have an air base of their own there before the U. S. Fleet could reach them.

But, as at the Coral Sea encounter, the U. S. Fleet already had sortied to await the Japanese. For more than a month Nimitz had been aware that something like this was in the wind, and he bet nearly everything he had that the strike would hit Midway. The weakened Pacific Fleet stood some 300 miles northeast of Midway, there to refuel, before the Japanese picket submarines took position. As a result, these boats sighted no U. S. ships and radioed no reports, and Admiral Nagumo discovered the presence of the U. S. carriers in a most unpleasant manner.

[5] Absent members of the original Pearl Harbor striking force were the *Shokaku* and the *Zuikaku*, the former undergoing Coral Sea damage repairs, and the latter reforming its air groups battered in that same action. Presence of these big carriers at Midway might well have been decisive.

[6] Fuchida and Okumiya state that Japanese plans "calculated that the enemy naval forces would be lured out by the strike on Midway Island and not before." *Battle That Doomed Japan*, 128. But in this calculation their overconfidence must have been tempered somewhat, else why the diversion into the Aleutians? Morison discusses this faulty Japanese strategy, probably more realistically. *Coral Sea and Midway*, 74–79.

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Midway Girds for Battle[1]

Even before these Japanese plans were made, and long before Admiral Yamamoto sortied eastward, all U. S. military planners recognized the vulnerable position of the Midway Atoll.[2] Especially was this position clear in the light of early Japanese successes elsewhere in the Pacific, and none was more keenly aware of the grim situation than the atoll's small garrison force. The 12 PBY's of VP–21 were soon withdrawn, and little help was expected from the crippled fleet. But on 17 December, while the 6th Marine Defense Battalion worked to improve existing defense installations, 17 SB2U–3's (Vindicators) of Marine Scout-Bomber Squadron 231 (VMSB–231) flew in unexpectedly from Hawaii. Led by Major Clarence J. Chappell, Jr., and assisted in over-water navigation by a PBY, the obsolescent craft made the 1,137-mile hop in nine hours and twenty minutes.[3] Other reinforcements, including about 100 officers and men of Batteries A and C of the 4th Defense Battalion, left Pearl Harbor on 19 December with the old Navy 7-inch [4] and the 3-inch guns which had been shipped to Pearl Harbor for Midway prior to the outset of war. (See Map 10, Map Section)

This force, on board the USS *Wright*, arrived on Christmas Eve, and Lieutenant Colonel Harold D. Shannon, who commanded Marine defense forces on the atoll, turned over to Battery A (Captain Custis Burton, Jr.) the mission of installing and manning the 7-inch and 3-inch batteries to be emplaced on Eastern Island. Battery C (First Lieutenant Lewis A. Jones) was assigned the job of setting up its 3-inch battery on Sand Island.[5]

Next day Midway received another Christmas present: 14 Brewster F2A–3's, the air echelon of Marine Fighter Squadron 221 (VMF–221), flew in from the USS *Saratoga* which was retiring from the abortive attempt to relieve Wake Island. This squadron immediately began a daily schedule of air search and patrolling. On 26 December the USS *Tangier* brought in

[1] Editor's Note: Material contained in Chapters 3 and 4 is derived mainly from Chapters III and IV of the historical monograph *Marines at Midway* by Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Heinl, Jr., published by Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, in 1948. This has been extensively rewritten and checked against sources subsequently brought to light.

[2] See Part II for a description of the geography and history of Midway.

[3] This was then the longest massed flight of single engine landplanes on record, and it had been carried out with no surface rescue craft available. CO MAG–21 serial 1173 to MGC, 19Dec41. The flight took off from Hickam since Ewa's runways were too short for the heavily-laden planes to use with complete safety.

[4] These 7-inch weapons had been removed from pre-World War I battleships and stored in reserve at naval yards. K. J. Bauer, "Ships of the Navy, 1775–1945," (MS available from the author).

[5] Interview with LtCol C. Burton, Jr., 26Sep47, hereinafter cited as *Burton*. The two Eastern Island batteries were located side by side on the south shore of the island, near the western tip, and the Sand Island battery was set up along the north shore of Sand Island.

Battery B of the 4th Defense Battalion (First Lieutenant Frank G. Umstead); additional machine gunners and 12 antiaircraft machine guns from the Special Weapons Group of that same battalion; an aviation contingent of three officers and 110 enlisted Marines constituting the ground echelon of VMF–221; aviation supplies; additional radar; and much-needed base-defense artillery material. Umstead's 5-inch battery, along with the island's other 7-inch battery, were set up south of the radio station on Sand Island. By New Year's Day of 1942 Midway was garrisoned by a strongly-reinforced defense battalion, and one fighter and one scout-bomber squadron.

A major air base took shape on Eastern Island under the direction of Lieutenant Colonel William J. Wallace who on 9 January became commanding officer of the Marine Aviation Detachment. Individual aircraft bunkers and underground personnel shelters were built, emergency fueling expedients devised, radars calibrated, and inexperienced operators trained to use them properly. Colonel Wallace was assisted by Major Walter L. J. Bayler, the Marine aviation officer who had been sent back from Wake with that atoll's last reports.[6]

The first test of this defense came on 25 January during twilight general quarters when a Japanese submarine surfaced abruptly and opened fire on Sand Island, apparently trying to knock out the radio station. Battery D opened up with its 3-inch guns and forced the enemy craft to crash-dive three minutes after it had surfaced. Sand Island and the adjacent lagoon had received from 10 to 15 indiscriminate hits, and Captain Buckner's Battery D had expended 24 rounds.

The next action against the atoll came two weeks later, on 8 February, when another submarine appeared less than 1,000 yards south of Sand Island and opened fire on the radio towers. Captain Loren S. Fraser's Battery A opened fire on this boat, and it submerged after Marines had returned two rounds. The enemy had hit a concrete ammunition magazine, but fortunately the small arms ammunition was not detonated. Two days later another submarine—or the same one—surfaced almost directly below two Marine fighter planes flying the sunset antisubmarine patrol. The submarine got off two rounds before First Lieutenant John F. Carey and Second Lieutenant Philip R. White, the fliers, could launch a diving attack. Both rounds from the submarine splashed in the lagoon, and then the boat was driven under water by the air attack just as the batteries of the 6th Defense Battalion were going into action. This was the last time for a number of months that Midway was troubled by enemy submarines.

As the winter wore on, Midway's air arm began to profit from the general expansion of Marine Corps aviation, and the two squadrons and their small provisional headquarters on 1 March became Marine Aircraft Group 22 (MAG–22). On 20 April Lieutenant Colonel Wallace was succeeded in command by Major Ira L. Kimes, and at the same time Major Lofton R. Henderson took command of VMSB–241, (the new designation of former VMSB–231). This was a busy time for MAG–22, which was then converting Eastern Island from a small advanced air base to a major installation capable of handling as many squadrons and aircraft types as could

[6] LtCol W. J. Wallace ltr to Col C. A. Larkin, 18Jan42.

physically be accommodated and protected there.

On 10 March, during the work and reorganization, the Marine fliers got their first test against enemy aircraft. Radar picked up a Japanese four-engined "Mavis" (Kawanishi 97) approximately 45 miles west of Midway, and 12 fighters under Captain Robert M. Haynes vectored out to intercept. They made contact with the enemy flying boat at 10,000 feet and shot it down.

Although the enemy plane did as well as it could to fight off this attack, this contact was more important as intelligence for Nimitz' staff in Pearl Harbor than as a test for the Marine fliers. Two aircraft of this type had tumbled four bombs into the hills behind Honolulu on the night of 3–4 March, and Nimitz already believed that this portended an offensive toward Hawaii. Now this new sighting near Midway gave added weight to his estimate, and this information went into the CinCPac intelligence "hopper" which shortly thereafter reached the considered opinion that the Japanese attack would strike Midway. By this time the Japanese code had been broken, also.[7] Thus were the fragments pieced together into Nimitz's May 1942 decision which caused him to wager nearly every ship he had in an early sortie from Pearl Harbor to the position 300 miles northeast of Midway from which the Japanese could be intercepted.

It was a bold, even though well-calculated, wager. The many ships on South Pacific convoy duty had to be left on their important jobs; Halsey's *Enterprise* and *Hornet* had rushed from the Doolittle launching area part way to the Carol Sea and back again to Pearl Harbor where they were placed under a new commander, Rear Admiral Raymond A. Spruance; Fletcher's *Yorktown* had just limped in from the Coral Sea needing an estimated 90 days of repair work; and all the Fleet's battleships were on the west coast where they could not be used (partly because Nimitz felt he did not have enough air strength to protect them, anyway). But Nimitz was convinced that his intelligence estimate was correct, and that the stand had to be made.

For the engagement Nimitz gave Fletcher, in over-all tactical charge,[8] direct command of Task Force 17 which included the *Yorktown* (rushed into shape in two days rather than 90), two cruisers, and six destroyers. Spruance commanded Task Force 16 which included the *Enterprise* and *Hornet*, six cruisers, and nine destroyers. Four oilers and 19 submarines also were assigned to the area, and, in addition, a North Pacific Force was formed of five cruisers and ten destroyers to screen the Aleutians. The Japanese had him outnumbered on all counts, and Nimitz knew that the enemy would be gunning for the three U. S. carriers. But his carriers likewise were his only hope, and the admiral ordered his subordinates to apply the rule of calculated risk when they went in with their air groups to stop the Japanese.

While Nimitz readied this reception committee, the Japanese completed their Midway plans and polished the rough operational edges with carrier training and

[7] *Battle That Doomed Japan*, 131; *U. S. & Sea Power*, 686.

[8] Fletcher was senior to Spruance, and thus became Officer in Tactical Command. But as it turned out, Spruance exercised practically an independent command during the critical days of 4–6 June, and this probably was fortunate because Fletcher had no aviation staff while Spruance had inherited Halsey's.

rehearsals. By the last week of May, all Japanese fleet elements were underway, and on decks Imperial sailors sunbathed and sang songs—vocal eruptions of what has been described as the "Victory Disease."[9]

Meanwhile on Midway, the focal point for these vast efforts, Marines got their first inkling of all this attention when Nimitz flew in on 2 May to see their senior officer, Lieutenant Colonel Shannon, and the atoll commander, Commander Cyril T. Simard. The admiral inspected the installations, and then directed Shannon to submit a detailed list of all supplies and equipment he would need to defend the atoll against a strong attack. Nimitz promised that all available items requested would be forwarded immediately, and within less than a week men and material were being embarked in Hawaii to bolster the island strength.

Three more 3-inch antiaircraft batteries totaling 12 guns, a 37mm antiaircraft battery of eight guns, and a 20mm antiaircraft battery of 18 guns were temporarily detached from the 3d Defense Battalion at Pearl Harbor; and two rifle companies of the 2d Marine Raider Battalion, together with a platoon of five light tanks, also were sent along to Midway. For MAG–22, still flying Brewster fighters and Vought Vindicator dive bombers, there would be 16 SBD–2 dive bombers and seven relatively new Grumman F4F–3 fighters.

Shortly after his return from Midway to Pearl Harbor, Nimitz arranged "spot" promotions to captain and colonel respectively for Simard and Shannon, and described to them in a joint personal letter the steps being taken to reinforce their atoll against the anticipated attack. Japanese D-Day, the admiral predicted, would be about 28 May. On the day they received this letter, Simard and Shannon conferred on their final plans for defense, and that evening Colonel Shannon assembled his key subordinates and warned them of the impending enemy attack. Additional defensive measures and priorities of final efforts were outlined, and all recreational activities suspended. May 25 was set as the deadline for completion of the measures ordered.

On the 25th, however, came two welcomed changes for the picture. First, Nimitz passed the word that the Japanese attack was not expected until early June, and, second, the first reinforcements arrived. On this date the USS *St. Louis* came in with the 37mm antiaircraft battery of the 3d Defense Battalion plus the two companies of raiders. Four of the 37's were emplaced on each island while Raider Company C (Captain Donald H. Hastie) went to Sand Island, and Company D (First Lieutenant John Apergis) to Eastern Island.

Next day the aircraft tender *Kittyhawk* arrived with the 3d Defense Battalion's 3-inch antiaircraft group commanded by Major Chandler W. Johnson, the light tank platoon for the mobile reserve, and the SBD–2's and the F4F–3's. In the following week additional Army and Navy planes arrived, and by 31 May there were 107 aircraft on the island.[10]

[9] *Battle That Doomed Japan*, 245. ". . . the spread of the virus was so great," the authors say, "that its effect may be found on every level of the planning and execution of the Midway operation."

[10] By this date the daily aviation gasoline consumption of planes based on Eastern Island was 65,000 gallons, and the following numbers of planes were based there: U. S. Army—four B–26's and 17 B–17's; U. S. Navy—16 PBY–5A's and six TBF's; U. S. Marine Corps—19 SBD–2's, 17 SB2U–3's, 21 F2A–3's, and seven F4F–3's.

For the ground forces and key civilian workers who had remained behind to help defend the island, the week was equally busy. Reinforcing weapons were installed, tanks tested in the sand, all defensive concentrations registered in, and the emplacing of an extensive system of obstacles, mines and demolitions completed. Sand Island now was surrounded with two double-apron barbed wire barriers, and all installations on both islands were ringed by protective wire. Antiboat mines of sealed sewer pipe, and obstacles of reinforcing steel lay offshore; the beaches were sown with homemade mines of ammunition boxes filled with dynamite and 20-penny nails; cigar box antitank mines covered likely beach exits; and bottles of molotov cocktail stood ready at every position. A decoy mockup airplane (a JFU—Japanese fouler-upper) was spotted prominently on the seaplane apron, and all underground fuel storage areas on Sand Island were prepared for emergency destruction by demolition.[11]

[11] The demolition system worked, too. On 22 May a sailor threw the wrong switch and blew up a good portion of the aviation gasoline. The supply was so critical after this that the pilots who arrived on the *Kittyhawk* did not get a prebattle chance to check out in their SBD–2's. Pipe lines also were wrecked in the blast, and MAG–22 thereafter had to refuel all planes by hand from 55-gallon drums.

Midway Versus the Japanese 4–5 June 1942

A Midway PBY spotted the approaching Japanese first, at about 0900 on June 3,[1] and tracked them long enough to report eleven ships making 19 knots eastward. These vessels were probably the transport and seaplane groups of the *Occupation Force*, and they were attacked at 1624 by nine B–17's which Captain Simard sent out following the PBY's contact report. The pilots reported having hit "two battleships or heavy cruisers" and two transports in the group then 570 miles away from Midway, but the fliers were mistaken in both ship identification and in calling their shots, for they actually hit nothing. A Catalina scored on one of these oilers later that night in a moonlight torpedo run.

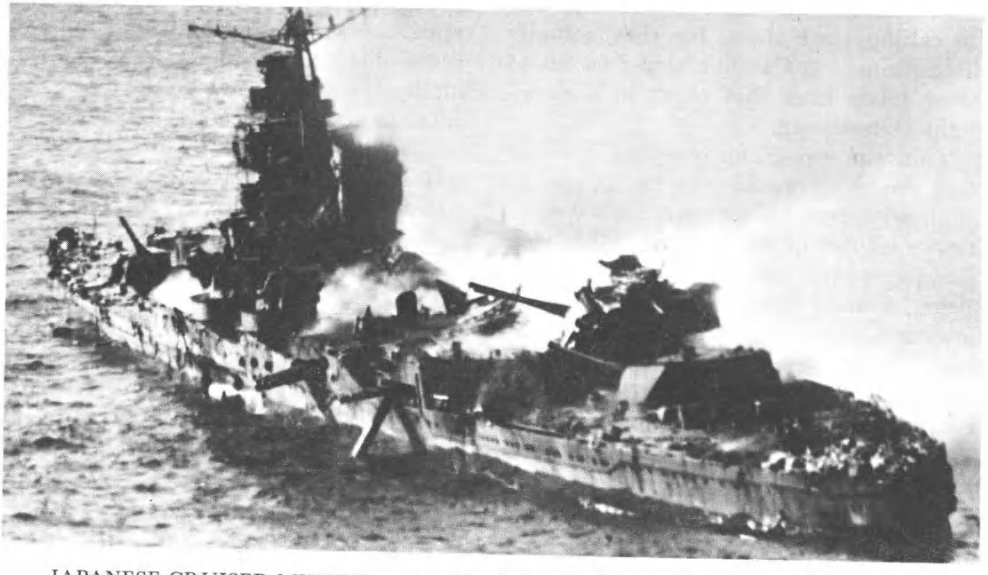
This was enough to convince Fletcher that the battle would soon be on, and he changed course from his station 300 miles east-northeast of Midway to gain a new position about 200 miles north. From there he could launch his planes the following morning against the Japanese carrier force which was expected to come in from the northwest. U. S. intelligence still was good. Nagumo continued to steam in from the northwest while his transports were under attack, and near daybreak on 4 June, when the *Yorktown* launched an early-morning search and while 11 PBY's were going up to patrol from Midway, he had reached a position approximately 250 miles northwest of the atoll. There at 0430 the Japanese admiral launched 36 "Kate" torpedo planes and 36 "Val" dive bombers, plus 36 escorting Zeros, for the first strike against the atoll.

At 0545 one of the Midway PBY's sighted these planes about 150 miles out from the island, and a short time later another PBY reported visual contact with two enemy carriers and the balance of the Japanese *Carrier Striking Force* some 200 miles from Midway. *Enterprise* intercepted this report, but Fletcher wanted to recover his search planes and sift further intelligence before launching his strike, and so he ordered Spruance to take the van southwesterly and lead off the attack against the enemy carriers.

Meanwhile the Midway Marines were ready for the first shock of attack. Ground force defenders at general quarters manned every weapon and warning device, and MAG–22, which already had fighters up to cover the sortie of the PBY's stood by for orders. At 0555, shortly after the second PBY report had fixed the position of the Japanese *Striking Force*, the 6th Defense Battalion radar logged a report of "many planes," and the Naval Air Station raised similar blips almost simultaneously. Air raid sirens began to wail, Condition One was set, and the MAG–22 pilots manned their planes. Both squadrons were in the

[1] Midway (Zone plus 12) time and West Longitude date.

CAMOUFLAGED LOOKOUT TOWER AT SAND ISLAND *stands amidst the damage caused by Japanese dive bombers which attacked Midway Atoll on 4 June 1942. (USN 17057)*



JAPANESE CRUISER MIKUMA, *sunk at the Battle of Midway, lies battered and smoking from the attacks of pilots of MAG-22 and the American carriers. (USN 11528)*

air in less than 10 minutes, VMF–221 heading to intercept the enemy planes and VMSB–241 off to rendezvous station 20 miles east where the dive bomber pilots would receive further instructions.

The VMF fliers under Major Floyd B. Parks sighted the Zero-escorted Val dive bombers at 0616 about 30 miles out from Midway, and Captain John F. Carey, leading one of Parks' divisions in an F4F–3, launched the attack from 17,000 feet. The Marine fliers were hopelessly outnumbered, and they found that the Zero fighters could "fly rings around them." They had time for only one pass at the bombers, and then had to turn their attention to the swarm of Zeros, from one to five of which got on the tail of each Marine fighter. Only three of the original 12 Marine pilots survived this brawl, and although the damage they inflicted on the enemy has never been assessed, it is believed that they splashed a number of the bombers and some of the Zeros. Other Zeros were led into the Midway antiaircraft fire.

Meanwhile another group of 13 Midway fighters under Captain Kirk Armistead came in for an attack against the enemy air formation. Again the damage inflicted upon the enemy was undetermined, but fewer Marine pilots were lost. For better or for worse, however, the fighter defense of Midway had been expended, and the problem now passed to the antiaircraft guns on the atoll.

The first Japanese formation attacked at about 0630 from 14,000 feet. Antiaircraft fire knocked down two of these horizontal bombers before they could unload, but 22 came on through to drop their bombs. And just as these initial explosions rocked the two islands, 18 planes of the enemy's second wave came over for their strike. Since each of these Japanese formations had left the carriers with 36 planes, it is possible that the Marine fliers scored some kills.[2]

The *Kaga* aircraft group in the first wave, assigned to attack the patrol plane facilities on Sand Island, dropped nine 242-kilogram bombs on and about the seaplane hangars, setting them aflame and starting a large fire in the fuel oil tanks 500 yards to the north. The *Akagi* planes plastered the north shore of Eastern Island to destroy the Marine mess hall, galley, and post exchange. These the returning enemy fliers described as hangars.[3] Other targets of the Japanese dive bombers included the already-flaming fuel storage at the north end of Sand Island, the Sand Island dispensary, and the Eastern Island powerhouse which suffered direct hits from two 805-kilogram bombs. These hits virtually destroyed the entire plant. And at the very end of the strike, the 6th Defense Battalion's Eastern Island command post received a direct hit which killed the Marine sector commander, Major William W. Benson, and wounded several other men. After these bombers completed their runs, the Zeros came in for strafing attacks. This one and only air strike on Midway was over shortly after 0700.

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[2] Maj W. S. McCormick, an experienced antiaircraft officer, counted the 22; and Capt M. A. Tyler, a VMSB–241 pilot with a grounded plane, counted the 18. CO, VMF–221 Rept to CO, MAG–22, 6Jun42, 1. However, *Battle That Doomed Japan*, 155, reports that "not a single hit" was sustained by the Japanese bombers until they struck in two waves of 36 planes each. This seems highly improbable in view of eyewitness accounts and damage sustained.

[3] *ONI Review*, 45–48. Information on ground defense from CO, 6th DefBn Rept to CO, NAS, Midway on action of 4–5Jun42, 13Jun42, 1–8.

Marine defense batteries fired throughout these attacks, and one source credited this antiaircraft fire with 10 kills.[4] Reports from Marine flyers would appear to require an increase of this estimate, however, since returning Midway pilots described enemy planes falling out of formation and others floundering into the water.[5] But Japanese authorities claim that only six of their planes—three level bombers, two dive bombers, and a fighter—failed to make it back to the carriers.[6] This controversy probably will never be resolved, for regardless of how many of these Japanese planes made it back to their carrier decks, Fletcher and Spruance—with a certain unintentional assistance from Nagumo—initiated action which resulted in the destruction of all these planes, anyway.

Nagumo's mistake was a natural one for a commander who believed himself to be unopposed on a "field" of battle of his own choice. Lieutenant Joichi Tomonaga, the flight officer who had commanded the first attack wave against Midway, radioed during his return flight that "There is need for a second attack wave." Meanwhile, with Nagumo still ignorant of the U. S. fleet's presence in the vicinity, six American TBF's and four B–26's from Midway came in to attack his ships. This convinced the Japanese admiral that Tomonaga was right, and he sent below to hangar spaces the 93 planes he had kept spotted for strikes against possible surface opposition. These planes were to be re-armed with bombs for the second strike. Then Nagumo called in the returning planes to arm them for the new attack of the atoll. While his men were involved in this work on the flight deck and in hangar spaces, Nagumo got the belated word from a *Tone* search plane that U. S. ships, including at least one carrier, were in the area. This caused another change of mind, and the admiral ordered the planes' ordnance changed again, from bombs back to torpedoes with which to attack the surface ships. But this decision was just tardy enough to allow Spruance to catch him with his planes down, and with torpedoes and bombs strewn in great confusion about the hangar deck.[7]

Meanwhile, as Nagumo vacillated, Admiral Nimitz's orders for Captain Simard to "go all out for the carriers," while Marine antiaircraft batteries worried about Midway, were under execution. VMSB–241, like the fighter squadron, had divided into two striking units, the first composed of 16 SBD–2's led by Major Lofton Henderson, and the second of 11 SB2U–3's commanded by Major Benjamin W. Norris. Henderson's group climbed to 9,000 feet to locate the enemy carriers, which were then undergoing the attack from the TBF's and the B–26's. Fliers of this group sighted the Japanese ships at 0744, but as the SBD's spiralled down they were set upon by swarms of Nakajima 97's and Zeros flying air cover, which were soon reinforced by more fighters from the carriers below. Henderson and several others were shot down (only eight of these planes got back to Midway) and the strike scored no hits although some were claimed.[8]

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[4] *ONI Review*, 72.

[5] CinCPac Rept to CominCh on the Battle of Midway, 8.

[6] *Battle That Doomed Japan*, 156.

[7] *ONI Review*, 17–19, 44–45.

[8] Statement of Capt E. G. Glidden, 7Jun42, 1. Japanese sources disclose, however, that no hits were scored in this attack. The Guadalcanal

Next came an attack by 15 B–17's led by Lieutenant Colonel Walter C. Sweeney, USA, but again claims of hits were optimistic. And as these Flying Fortresses pulled away, Major Norris came in with his 11 Vindicators which had taken off with Henderson. Beset by the Zeros, Norris turned to the nearest target at hand, and the Marines crowded their ancient planes into a standard glide run almost on top of the Japanese battleship *Haruna*—previously claimed as an Army B–17's victim off Luzon. Some of the fliers also went after the *Kirishima*, which was nearby, but neither attack managed any hits. Three Marines were shot down, and the group was credited with splashing two enemy fighters, plus two probables.[9]

By 1100 all surviving Marine aircraft had made their way back to the atoll where all hands grimly assessed the battle's damage and prepared for subsequent action. Of the VMF–221 fighters which had gone in against the attacking Japanese planes, only 10 returned, and of this number only two were in shape to leave the ground again. Thirteen F2A–3's and two F4F's were missing, along with the eight craft lost from the Henderson group and the three shot away from the Norris force. Slick black smoke from oil fires billowed up from the islands, and ruptured fuel lines left more than two-thirds of the aviation fuel temporarily unavailable. Gasoline had to be sent to the field from Sand Island, and hand-pumped from drums. The Marine ground defense force had sustained 24 casualties, and four ordnancemen of VMF–221 had been lost to a direct bomb hit.

At 1700 a burning enemy carrier was reported 200 miles northwest of Midway, and Major Norris prepared VMSB–241's six operational SBD–2's and five SB2U–3's for a night attack. The planes took off at 1900, but could not find the carrier. Major Norris failed to return from this mission, although the other pilots managed to home by the light of oil fires and the antiaircraft searchlights which were turned up as beacons.[10] Meanwhile, the Battle of Midway had been decided at sea in a fight of carrier aircraft.

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airfield, captured two months later, was named in Maj Henderson's honor. Rear gunners of this strike group are credited with four enemy kills plus two additional probables.

[9] *ONI Review*, 19; *USSBS Interrogations*, Nav No 2, Capt Susumu Kawaguchi, IJN,I,6. See also *Coral Sea and Midway*, 111, for Adm Morison's dismissal of damage claims by land-based fliers.

[10] VMSB–241 Rept of Combat, 7Jun42, 3.